

# 'Growing up under the shadow of the gun'

*Research on the lives of women who grew up with the realities of the Armed Force Special Powers Act in Kashmir.*



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## Abstract

Implemented in 1990, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act gives the Indian army blanket immunity to arrest, interrogate, kill and rape Kashmiri's if they are considered a safety threat. At this moment seventy per cent of Kashmir's population is under the age of thirty-five. This means that most of them have grown up knowing no other reality than that of living in a heavily securitized zone. This thesis is written based on the memories and experiences of thirty women who all come from Kashmir. Some of them were born just before 1990, most of them after this defining year in Kashmir history. Women's voices are the most misunderstood and underreported in a conflict. This thesis aims to find an answer to how the securitization of Kashmir, through the AFSPA, has mobilized women to use public space as a tool for resistance in Srinagar. It finds that women mobilize to claim a space for their own identity as Kashmiri women, within a larger society that experiences an attack on its identity in the form of Indian occupation. Social media is an important tool my respondents use to voice their opinion, get to know about protests and organize their own gatherings. By coming together, stepping out in public to share their lived experiences these women are subverting a gendered public space and a traditionally gendered resistance movement. Public space thus becomes a tool for resistance against Indian occupation and traditional boundaries at the same time. The participants of this research project painted a picture of a generation of women that will no longer wait until Kashmir's independence to fight for their own rights. No longer are they simply a victim of conflict or a family member of a missing loved one. Slowly but steadily they are changing the face of resistance in Kashmir.

## Acknowledgments

*This thesis is dedicated to the women who participated in this research project. It is their voice that made this thesis possible and I hope above all that this shines through every line that you read from here on forward. In addition, I want to thank all Kashmiris who have been so kind to help me by talking to me, listening to me, or just simply pouring me a cup of Kahwah. I will never forget the time I spent in Srinagar.*

A special thank you to my parents, the two most amazing people who are always there to support and love me and to my girlfriends who are my ever-present cheer squad. Every woman needs one.

-Devi Boerema-

An excerpt from:

‘The Exodus of a City’  
by Ifsha Zehra and Samia Mehraj.

*It's 1990, I'm not born yet and someone in my father's house shuts a window to a neighbour who may never return.*

It is 2008 and my fourteen-year-old self  
Has a platter of dreams to devour  
A whole list of skies to soar  
Skies

But skies are brooding in 2008

Holidays are hartals  
Firecrackers are cloaked as gunshots  
A roll number slip is a curfew pass  
Newspapers are like a morgue's diary entries

Familiar faces, dead faces, disappeared faces  
Kashmir in the lap of warring countries  
I am somewhere in the heart of the rugged, dusty lanes of downtown,

The roads are deserted much like the hearts of its inhabitants.

Two months and I haven't left my home  
Bearing the gifts of agony  
Memorizing the verses of mourning  
*Inna lillahi wa inna ilay hi rajioon*  
*Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon*

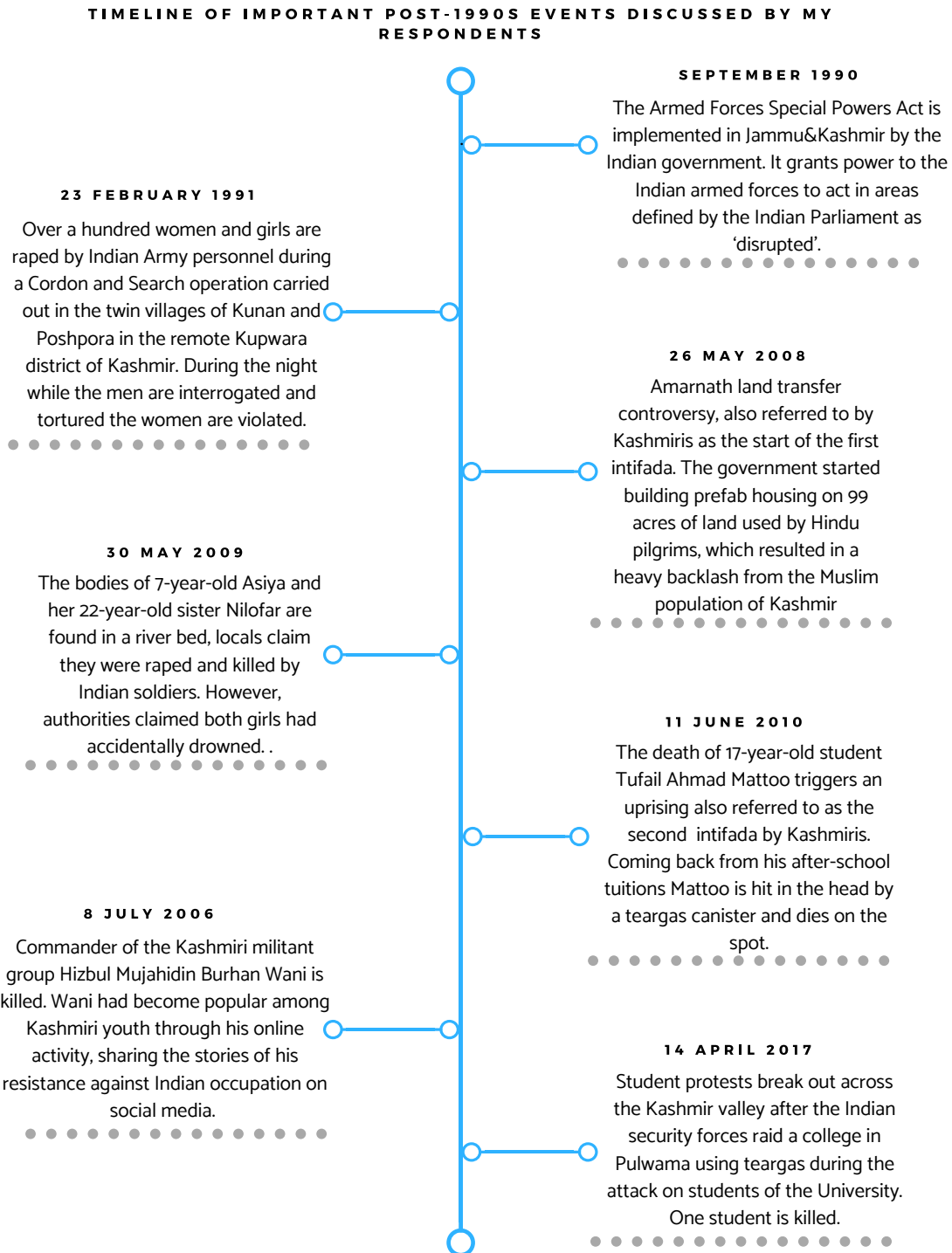
I lose count of the deaths ... 1 to 2, 2 to 10, 10 to...30

But I can never forget my own.

Figure 1. Map of Kashmir region

Figure 2. Map of Srinagar city

Figure 3. Timeline of events





## Glossary

- **Azadi** - Comes from the Persian word for liberty, is also used in Urdu, Hindi and Kashmiri to refer to the liberation struggle or the concept of freedom. Azadi can there for also mean personal freedom from societal pressures outside the context of a conflict.
- **Cordon-and-search or 'crack down'** - "A cordon-and-search operation takes place when the army receives information of movement or perhaps a hideout of 'anti-national elements', as they call them throughout any of its local intelligence sources. The area is cordoned, i.e. surrounded on all sides by soldiers, and then a door-to-door search is conducted to locate such elements. The army has vast powers under the AFSPA and the Disturbed Areas Act, and can conduct cordon-and-search operations, which are military 'counter-insurgency' operations, at any time of the day or night. In the local language they are called 'crackdowns.'" From Do you remember Kunan Poshpora? (Bathool et al. 2016:73)
- **Hartal** – shutdown of public life through the closing of shops, offices and schools. Different actors can call for a hartal, the government as well as the opposition.
- **Jawan** – is used in south Asian languages for a young person, but is also a term of praise or young Indian army soldiers choosing to serve the country at a young age.
- **Kashmir** - In this thesis I use the word Kashmir to mark the area that is under Indian control, which is often referred to as Indian Administrated Kashmir (IAK) within a local context. As supposed to Azad Kashmir (free Kashmir) that is under Pakistani control.
- **Kahwah** - A traditional green tea that is popular in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir. Green tea leaves are boiled with saffron, cardamom and cinnamon bar. Flakes of almond are added as well.
- **Militant** - in this thesis I use the word militant for people who fight against the Indian government by taking up arms. In a local context, they are also addressed as freedom fighters. However, my respondent used the word militant more often and in this thesis I follow their use of language.
- **Shaheed** - Described in the Quran as a Muslim who dies during Jihad. The word is used in various way after someone dies in Kashmir to mark them as a martyr. My respondents addressed the problematic tendencies of Kashmir society to more of often label male diseased as martyrs and females as victims.



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## Chapter one – Introducing my research project

As the extreme cold of a Kashmiri winter dissipates, the region holds its breath every year. The onset of spring has become synonymous for the start of a new season of violence. It is marked by a new round of anti-terror operations by the Indian government, militant attacks and reactionary protests by the locals. In April of 2017 before spring had even started Kashmiri students came out in droves to protest throughout the valley after the Indian army opened fire on fellow students inside a school in Pulwama. A town about 40 km away from Srinagar. Indian media quickly labelled these protests as historic (Zia 2017). Media claimed the protests showed the new face of resistance against India, because the protesters were younger than ever before, women participated for the first time in stone pelting and social media was the driving force behind it.

At this moment about seventy per cent of the valley is under the age of thirty-five (Swami 2016). They are of a generation that is born in the mid 1980s and early 1990s when the Kashmir conflict developed into an armed conflict. The Indian government reacted by implementing far reaching securitization measures. This means that a majority of Kashmiri society at this moment has known no other reality than one of living in a securitized space. Or as one respondent for this research project described it to me, this generation has grown up “under the shadow of the gun”<sup>1</sup>. While the main securitization tool, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) covers a lot of acts by the military, violence against women is not considered an act performed ‘in the line of duty’ and is thus an offence that should be charged under civilian law (Batoool et al. 2016). However, none of the crimes that women have reported against the Indian army have ever even made it to a pre-trial stage. Amit Ranjan who wrote a gendered critique on the AFSPA notes that in areas where the AFSPA is introduced perpetrators of crimes against women can claim their victims were foreign agents, which means their crime is covered under the rule. The burden of proof to claim otherwise is on the victim, if she is still alive to tell her story.

This raises questions about the effects of securitization, in the form of the AFSPA, on the lives of women and their ability to speak about the harm that is being done to them. While most scholars have looked at women as victims of securitization measures, I am more interested in women as actors with agency

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.23, At the office, Secret location, 07-03-2018

shaping resistance movements. Women's participation in acts of (violent) resistance, has become particularly a point of debate after the student riots of 2017. The participation of women was seen as a key marker of the changing face of protest in Kashmir. In this thesis I explore if women's resistance is indeed a marker for wider societal change in the region and how the AFSPA affected the generation of women that grew up under its shadow to shape resistance in public space.

Developed as a single research question I ask:

'How has the securitization of Kashmir – through the use of the AFSPA – **mobilized** women to use **public space** as a tool of **resistance** in Srinagar, since its implementation in 1990'.

Guiding my research project are the key concepts extracted from my analytical framework; resistance, mobilization and public space. These concepts will be discussed separately in the following three chapters. Securitization and gender, as the foundational concepts of my framework, guide my research throughout the thesis.

### Historical origin of the conflict in Kashmir<sup>2</sup>.

As the deadline for India's independence from nearly 200 years of British rule was set on the 15th of August 1947, the matter of what that India looked like still had to be settled. With barely five weeks left Cyril Radcliff, a lawyer without any experience in border-drawing and who had never been to India before, was flown in for the job (Pillalamarri 2017). The announcement of the Radcliff Line was made two days after independence. It led to the death of between one and two million Indians and left 14 million more displaced (Dalrymple, 2015). Many Indians today consider the haphazardly drawing of the country's borders as the root cause of its ongoing border disputes. The Northern state of Kashmir might well be the best-known example of these mistakes of the past. It would have made sense for this Muslim majority state to join Pakistan some believed, but as the Hindu Maharaja in charge at the time tried to keep Kashmir an independent territory, a pro-Pakistan rebellion forced him to ask for India's help in defending his kingdom (Pillalamarri 2017). In the following years India and Pakistan have fought three wars over Kashmir. India still holds most of Kashmir. However, Pakistan is in charge over a considerable piece of the most northern part. During the 1962 war between India and China the latter took control of the Aksai Chin region in on the North-East part of the state. The 'Line of Control' now divides the rest of the

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<sup>2</sup> Using Kashmir from here on to mean the Indian administered part of Kashmir.

territory into Pakistan administered Kashmir (also called Azad Kashmir meaning free Kashmir), and Indian administered Kashmir. The region experiences flare-ups in local violence and border disputes ever so often.

### The securitization of Kashmir.

Tracing the history of securitization in Kashmir in response to the start of the armed struggle, it is important to look at the development of the AFSPA. Created by the British as the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance, in 1942, the act was meant to suppress the Indian independence movement (Bhattacharyya 2018). Ironically, after independence it was quickly used to fight Naga insurgency groups in the North-Eastern states in India by the Indian government. Jawaharlal Nehru, first prime minister of India was fully aware that maintaining the AFSPA would violate human rights, even though he did not seem eager to do so, he defended the rule in parliament (Ranjan 2015). In the following years there were very little amendments made to the AFSPA except in 1972 it was decided that the central government and the state government both had the power to declare an area as disturbed. Historically an area is marked as disturbed when it is home to anti-government insurgency groups. The AFSPA can only be implemented in these disturbed regions. After the North-eastern states of India, Kashmir became the second region to be marked as disturbed in India.

Although heavily disputed since 1947 the actual armed resistance against Indian occupation in the Kashmir valley can be defined in two distinct periods much later. After badly run elections, which were considered unfair by many, discontent over Delhi's rule in the early 1980s led freedom fighters turning to Pakistan for help. Around the 1990s many armed groups sprung up which had been trained in, or directly came from, the Pakistan held side of Kashmir (BBC 2012). With common rule of law not being effective enough to fight the upcoming militant groups, the Indian government implemented the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Jammu & Kashmir by the end of 1990. The act is considered by its critics as a draconian law, because it protects armed forces in areas labelled as 'disrupted territory' from prosecution of violence committed 'in the line of duty'. A Human Rights Watch report, marking the 50-year anniversary of the use of the law in India, calls it an abusive law which facilitates especially extrajudicial killings, torture, rape and disappearances (HRW 2008). The AFSPA allows the Indian army to act with impunity with far reaching effects to daily lives of Kashmiris. For example, because the army's ability to arrest or question anyone randomly people in Kashmir do not go out much past 8pm fearing these arrest and possible disappearance happen more easily at night. The veil of untouchability that the AFSPA

provides the Indian army with, gives them the power to walk in to anyone's house at any time, claiming to search for militants hiding out. My respondents have talked about the trauma this causes especial to females, left alone in the house while their male family members are questioned outside, to have these army men meticulously going through their private possessions, like underwear and care products. In a society where man and women do not share these intimate details about their lives it is not a far stretch to label these actions as sexual harassment.

While it is the state and central government that govern the AFSPA's implementation, comments made by mister Chidambaram in 2013, the then Finance Minister, show how much power the army has in keeping the AFSPA alive once it is used.

*"The Army has taken a strong stand against any dilution of the AFSPA... We can't move forward because there is no consensus. The present and former Army Chiefs have taken a strong position that the Act should not be amended... They also do not want the government notification [of bringing areas under the AFSPA] to be taken back. How does the government move forward...to make the AFSPA a more humanitarian law?" (Bhattacharyya 2015:4).*

In a response former Chief Minister of Punjab Captain Amarendra Singh made a statement that resonates with proponents of the AFSPA. According to Singh the Indian army is fighting a difficult war with multiple adversaries attacking them from the border, but also from within the state. This warrants the need to legally protect these soldiers that are deployed in these regions (Bhattacharyya 2016). Critics on the other hand have compared India's military presence and the use of the AFSPA to hunting at a mosquito with a gun. There are currently 700,000 army men stationed in Kashmir, while General Officer Commanding AK Bhatt in Srinagar estimated the number of militants active in the valley as of June 2018 between 250 and 275. These numbers make Kashmir an exemplary case of the claim that "that security issues do not necessarily reflect the objective, material circumstances of the world" (Balzacq et al. 2016:495). The combination of threat management and the politics of threat design is discussed within securitization theory. Judging from the history of the AFSPA, the military's disproportional numbers and the Indian army's defences of it, Kashmir has historically been successfully marked as a security threat, while the on the ground reality might suggest otherwise. New rules are implemented, that go beyond the scope of 'normal' regulations, in the fight against terrorist groups. Indian audiences consider the threat of Pakistan sponsored terrorism seeping through the Indian borders via the Himalayan mountains of Kashmir,

believable enough to justify securitization measures like the AFSPA. It should be noted that the majority of the Indian audience that feels this way does not suffer the consequences of living under this rule.

There are various approaches or schools within securitization theory, that look at this process. They try to understand how an issue can become sufficiently marked, by a securitizing actor, as a threat to a relevant audience, allowing the implementation of laws that are outside the 'normal' body of regulations and the effects that these laws have on society. Within the Copenhagen School of thought emphasis is put on 'the speech act'. Literature in this vein looks at security as a performative act "it does not only describe the world but it can also transform social reality" (Balzacq et al. 2016:495). Security for the Copenhagen school is about the interaction between securitizing actor and audience, through a speech act the first convinces the latter extreme measures are necessary to control the perceived threat. Applying this to the case study of Kashmir, the Indian state as the securitizing actor, heavily influenced by the military, convinces its relevant audience about the need of the AFSPA. In this conflict the audience is not the Kashmir population, but the wider audience of Indians living outside Kashmir. The Hindu majority population of India is much more responsive to the threat of Muslim terrorism, than the predominantly Muslim state of Kashmir. While it does not hold the power to vote on the implementation of the AFSPA, this audience functions as an important form of moral support and thus becomes relevant.

The founder of securities studies Stephen Walt who worked through International Relation Studies from the 'Realist School' defined security studies as the study of the threat, use and control of military force (Balzacq et al. 2016). The Paris School of thought remains closer to this idea than the Copenhagen School does, which allows for a much broader interpretation of securitization because a speech act can be applied to any issue. The Copenhagen School is at its core about survival of any threat to society, military, environmental, digital, or otherwise. The so-called Paris school on the other hand, takes Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality as a starting point; analysing the functioning of government. This approach fits the case study of the Kashmir conflict in the sense that it mainly focuses on military action by the government which is responsible for the process of securitization. For Foucault governmentality was about the way bodies are regulated through government institutions. "Thought and technique together comprise the ensemble of "institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics" through which governmental interventions are devised, and conduct conducted" (Foucault in Murray Li 2007:2). Especially through the securitization lens, it is important to analyse what government does, because it affects the lives of the population. The danger of securitization is that it can be abused to



legitimize and empower the role of the military (Emmers 2007). This is of course exactly what critics of the government believe is happening in Kashmir. The AFSPA has grown in to an almost unstoppable wild beast of securitization that provides a dangerous immunity to military forces. Not just as a rule that allows arrests and interrogations, but as a much more devastating 'letter of approval' to any kind of violent action the army deems necessary in the fight against terrorism. It is therefore important to look at what the effects of it are on non-state actors. Building on a slowly developing body of work that takes a critical gendered look at securitization, the focus of my research project is on the effects the AFSPA has on the lives of women from Kashmir.

### Complication in my research – providing a gender critical view on securitization.

The critique on securitization theory that I am most interested in can be found in the work of Lene Hansen, who criticizes the Copenhagen School for its reliance on the 'speech act'. A speech act, produced by the securitizing actor, is needed to sufficiently label the threat as existential within the framework of the Copenhagen School. Hansen uses two concepts to discuss the barriers that this emphasis on the speech act raises to include a gender perspective. The first, 'security of silence' occurs when insecurity cannot be voiced. Secondly '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 nationality and religion (Hansen 2000). Using the work of Hansen on the silent security dilemma, I will explore the gap in securitization theory that fails to address women's everyday experiences of living in a securitised conflict zone and the complex power relations that involve the need to voice those experiences. While Hansen specifically critiques the Copenhagen School, I take the approach of Balzacq et al. as a starting point for my critical analysis. Their work claims that "Securitization theory articulates a specific understanding of security (influenced by the speech act) with a distinctive 'analytics of government'" (2016:497). Thus, combining the two elements, that the Copenhagen School and later the Paris School have brought to securitization theory, in an approach on securitization that first the case study of Kashmir.

While there are scholars who have argued that including gender in the categories that securitization theory, through the use of the Copenhagen School, now includes is a must (Hudson 2005, Hoogensen & Vigeland Rottem 2004), there are others who have looked at the impact on women's lives of a securitizing measure (MacKenzie 2009, Gerard&Pickering 2013, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2006). The difference between the two approaches is valuable because one adds gender as an extra option to the process of

securitization, while the other looks at the gendered effect of any securitization measure. By looking specifically at the gendered impact of securitization it is acknowledged that women always already were differently affected than men by conflict or post-conflict situations, and their voices are heard. It is my belief that by only adding women as a topic of securitization this research overlooks that women are part of a society and it the complexities of the interactions between men and women in a conflict zone are ignored. Shalhoub-Kevorkian aptly starts her research project by pointing out that “women's voices, roles, and contributions are the most misunderstood issues in the analysis of war zones and conflict areas” (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2008:109). Research on the lived experiences of women in conflict zones in relation to securitization measures is extremely rare. Aiming to fill this gap in research I take the gendered impact as an overarching theme of my research which will guide the three sub-questions that I address in the following chapters.

Chapter two: *‘Why do women protest against the Indian government’s occupation of Kashmir in the form of the AFSPA?’*

This chapter looks at what motivates women to take part in the Kashmiri resistance movement. The intersections of their identities have different meanings, as Hansen in her critique on securitisation theory explains in the context of subsuming security. Women join the resistance because they feel their identity is being threatened as a group. At the same time they feel a need to strengthen their own identity, within the group, as complex and multi-layered.

Chapter three: *‘How do women mobilize to shape their resistance against Indian occupation of Kashmir in the form of AFSPA?’*

This chapter looks at how women join the resistance movement, what tool they use to mobilize. Hansen’s security of silence refers to the difficulties that women face to make themselves heard. Social media has proven to be a preferred tool to break down those barriers.

Chapter four: *‘How have women in Kashmir’s capital Srinagar been using public space as a tool for resisting government oppression through the use of AFSPA?’*

In this chapter the specific use of public space as a tool for resistance is explored. Public space in Kashmir has undergone many changes particularly in the last few years. This has led to the apparent rise in numbers of women protesters, making it relevant to look at how women have mobilized since 1990. It explores the effects of the AFSPA on both resistance and mobilization strategies.

Key argument that is leading my research project focuses on the need to explore women's lives in conflict zones. The effects of securitization on the lives of women is under researched, especially from an angle that takes women as active agents mobilizing for change instead of helpless victims of securitization.

## Methodology

The ontological starting point of my research project can be found in a combined structure/agency approach of the effects of a securitization measurement on the lives of women.

Here agency is seen as the freedom of an agent to act uninhibited by outside influences, and structure accounts for the societal structures that shape people's decision making. Women in Kashmir have shown the ability to use their agency in making choices about their lives that effect the structures of the society they live in. My research on the other hand shows that they are at the same time influenced by the structures of the society they live in, it shapes their behaviour at times while in other moments they resist it. This means that my research cannot be defined strictly to one ontological starting point or structure, because it also has an eye for the ability of people to change structures. This dualism of structure and agency acknowledges that both influence each other yet have to be seen as separate entities (Parker 2000).

Working through this ontological stance of dualism, my epistemological approach takes an interpretive stance. Research in this vein "centres on the way in which human beings make sense of their subjective reality and attach meaning to it" (Rukwaru 2015:7). My research, that takes securitization theory as its guiding concept, is shaped by the need to understand what is happening to the lives of women in Kashmir that grew up after the introduction of the AFSPA in 1990. I approach this through interviewing a selected group of women in Srinagar, Kashmir. "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman 2006:9). To understand how securitization affects the lived experiences of women in Kashmir, I need to talk to them about their lives, feelings and experiences. Through qualitative research I have tried, as much as possible, to understand how they negotiate on a daily basis resistance towards existing structures. Qualitative research, as an umbrella term, can be used to define many different research approaches, such as narrative, ethnographic and phenomenological research. My research, which was shaped through interviewing thirty women from Kashmir, who came of age in the period after 1990, can be defined as a case study. A case study is "as an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger

class of (similar) units” (Gerring 2004:342). My unit of thirty women, aims to understand in part the lives of women in Kashmir, however I understand the limitation of this rather small focus group. The experiences of the thirty women I talked to do not, of course, reflect the lives of all women in Kashmir. However, by selecting my participants based on four focus groups I have tried, as much as possible, to come to a representative overview of women who are actively shaping public debate on the conflict.

Being aware how contentious the use of words like militant, martyr or oppressor are in the context of a conflict zone, I have chosen to explain the use of those words in a glossary. My aim was to write this thesis as an outside observer. However, I do not believe a researcher can ever be a neutral voice or removed her own identity from the work. As a rule, when dealing with contested words and concepts, I have chosen every time to take the viewpoint of Kashmiris, because it is the voices of the women who I spoke to that I want to give a platform to in this thesis.

In the following chapters I will reflect separately more in-depth on my methodological approach according to each guiding concept of the chapters. I have chosen to use this strategy, because it allows me to reflect on my own place as a researcher, specifically during the time of interviewing and discuss the effect of the methodology on the topic of that specific chapter. This means that when I talk about what drives my respondents to resistance against Indian occupation in chapter one that in my methodology part of that chapter I reflect on how interviewing specifically women is an act of resistance in research and how I personally have experienced talking about resistance in Kashmir.

### How to read this thesis

The following three chapters of this thesis are designed to each explore one of the three main concepts that shape my research question. The concepts of resistance, mobilization and public space form the structure of this thesis. In each chapter I discuss the influence that securitization in the form of the AFSPA has on this concept, particularly for women. This means that in every chapter the reader will be introduced to new theory that helps explore the interaction of the guiding concept with the effects of securitization on women’s lives. The theory used in each chapter is derived from my interviews, the theory that I bring in forms a lens to interpret the stories of the thirty Kashmiri women I spoke to.

Because of the complicated and protracted nature of the conflict and mosaic structure of the theory used in this thesis, I have chosen to structure every chapter the same way. Every chapter starts with an

introduction to show how my cases study results lead to the use of theory and why it matters in a social and academic context. Each introduction also reflects on the guiding concept of the chapter and why it fits in to my larger analytical framework. What follows is a historic context of the conflict in connection with the concept discussed in the chapter. Theory, case study and methodology are discussed separately, followed by an in-depth conclusion that structures the chapter and answers the sub-question that shaped the chapter.

## Chapter two - Resistance.

‘Why do women **resist** against the Indian government’s occupation of Kashmir in the form of the AFSPA?’

This chapter explores why women choose to join the resistance movement in Kashmir. What motivates them on an individual and group level to move from a silent bystander to an active participant? The larger question of what motivates people to come to (violent) conflict is discussed in conflict theory through, among others, the framework of Social Identity Theory. Approaches stemming from this theoretical frame look at our innate need to feel secure in our identity as human beings.

Before exploring the academic debate on Social Identity Theory and its relevance to the research, it is important to first understand the main concept of this chapter; resistance.

Resistance explained as a counter-action against an attack on the self, is seen as an act of refusal to accept or comply with something. Fighting back to a dominant power can be done individually or as a group. Resistance movements are often performing illegal activities to subvert the power that they feel is oppressive. Michael Keith and Steven Pile describe resistance as an ever-present idea in the spaces of power. “Resistance draws attention to not only the myriad spaces of political struggle, but also to the politics of everyday spaces, through which political identities constantly flow and fix” (Keith & Pile 2013: xi). Poetically they add that resistance is a “refusal to be wiped off the map of history” (Keith & Pile 2013: xi).

Viewing the work that women collectively do in Kashmir to express their discontent with the AFSPA can appropriately be marked as a resistance movement, because they refuse to accept the status quo. Women are the subject of violence by the Indian army through the loss of family members, rape and intrusion on their use of space (private as well as public). However, their resistance is twofold. It is directed at oppression by the Indian government, but at the same time it is interwoven in the struggle to change the oppressive elements they experience within their own society. Over the course of my research I encountered various ways in which women try to negotiate the two, often struggling to understand if the two can even be combined or if one takes precedence over the other.

Within securitization theory the resistance of women and the complexities they face within traditional societies is a blind spot that has only recently started to get some attention (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2006, Noonan 1995). It matters to have a better view of why women resist, because research shows that projects that work towards peace are more successful if they include the lived experiences of women in the peace process, this means not just giving women a seat at the table, but to include a women's agenda (Ellerby, 2016).

### Historical perspective on women in the Kashmir resistance movement.

Kashmiri women have been present within the resistance, from the start of the movement against the Indian occupation of Kashmir. It has only changed forms, from passive to a more active role, but they were present from its onset (Bathool et al. 2017). In an interview with Free Press Kashmir human rights lawyer Khurram Parvez reminds us that "In the 1950s, '60s, women would come out with sticks. The only difference remains, it is being documented now." (Gazi 2017). When the conflict in Kashmir changed during the end of the 1980s into an armed resistance women were as much part of the resistance movement as men. Although there is no proof of women actively picking up arms, there are many writers who have addressed the ways in which women participated (Bathool 2017 Anjum 2011). During those first years of the armed struggle their roles were supportive in the sense that women would provide shelter to freedom fighters, but at times they also smuggled guns and ammunition on the account that their identity as women attracted less suspicion. During major protests in 2008 and 2010, by Kashmiris described as the first and second intifada, women are even reported to have joined men in the throwing of stones at armed forces and leading 'all women' protests. However, historically there is a complexity between resistance from inside the home and resistance in public space by women. One of the leading female faces in the Kashmir separatist movement Asyia Andrabi, for example, actively mobilizes women to call for women's return to the domestic space (Chakravarty 2018). "If women will go for armed struggle, what will happen to our homes, what will happen to our security?" Andrabi told me during a conversation at her house at the beginning of this year. By late May she was arrested again on charges of inciting young women to take part in protests in April of this year. While talking to Andrabi I got the feeling that the question if women's resistance is meant to take place inside the home or outside, is an internal struggle for her as well.

While Andrabi struggles to see women as active fighters another famous female voice in the debate inspires women to come out as 'victim-activists'. Parveena Ahanger, turned 'victim-activist' after her 14-

year old son was abducted by the Indian army and was never heard of again. Her organisation Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons supports others like her, mostly women, who have lost a son or a husband. Every month they meet in Pratab Park in the centre of Srinagar to hold a protest. An estimated 8 to 10 thousand Kashmiris have gone missing through enforced disappearance by the Indian state since 1989 to 2006 (APDP website).

“A Kashmiri woman's identity and place in historical accounts describing her position in the ongoing struggle - more often than not - is seen to rest at being a "victim" (Anjum 2011). It is almost as if one needs the other; to establish the extraordinary status of the female combatant, she needs to predominately be pictured as the victim. This creation of contradictions in female identity labelled as the participant or the victim has been one of the result of the conflict. They walk a tightrope between being seen as the incidental participant and the eternal victim. Taking control of the narrative surrounding women's identity was for many of my respondents an important reason for participating in the resistance.

### Theoretical approach – Social Identity Theory.

We live in a time where identity matters more than ever before. As people, we refer to our identity to claim connection to a religion, justify our support of a sports club or choose the clothes that we wear based on how we identify. Companies like to use their corporate identity by projecting an idea about their brand to their potential customers. For many of us identity is something we 'do' on a daily basis without really thinking about how identity for some can have a negative impact on their life. Identity matters because it carries authority, it is about the identification as the self on a personal level as well as defining what it means to be this person as seen by others around you (Funk 2013). This social identity is explored in the field of social and political science to come to an explanation of individual and group behaviour. In the context of Kashmir, it matters to explore identity as a motivation for resistance, because apart from geography it is one of the defining characteristics of this conflict.

### *Identity and conflict*

Within conflict studies the question of how and why violence happens drives scholars. What makes people change from passive bystanders into active protesters? From a structuralist point of view the structural dynamics in society are held responsible for violent outbreaks. Mohammed Ayoob for example takes a Durkheimian approach, in his claim that rapid societal change causes destabilization which leads to violence (Ayoob 1996). Founder of the structural approach to conflict explanation, Johan Galtung



divides conflicts in two forms; actor conflicts and structural conflicts, but finds that the latter one are far more common.

Within a structural approach, Mary Kaldor uses identity politics to explain how the breakdown of a society causes modern conflicts. Kaldor's concept of 'new wars' rethinks the idea of war as a case of 'politics of ideas' to that of globalization being responsible for the breaking of traditional structure, causing a crisis of identity. This she finds to be the leading cause for the wars of the post-Cold War era (Aston 2005).

Taken very strictly, the Kashmir conflict cannot be counted as a 'new war', because it does not have a post-Cold War origin. However, Kunal Mukherjee finds that violence has strongly risen in Kashmir since the 1990s and the specific characteristics Kaldor assigns to new wars fit the case. He uses the AFSPA as an example of how militarization of the region has led to human rights abuses and points out the identity politics that define the conflict. "The security personnel stationed in Kashmir have caused absolute mayhem in the region, many of whom are frustrated individuals and have no understanding of the region's local culture" (Mukherjee 2014:3).

### *Moving towards an actor based explanation of conflict*

Mukherjee shows the value of the concept to explain the Kashmir conflict particularly as an identity conflict that violates human rights through the securitization tool of the AFSPA. However, he does not work from a bottom up angle, starting from the lived experiences of Kashmiri women, like I do. I prefer an actor based approach, because I am interested in what drives people on an existential level. Moreover, I work from a belief that my case study shows actor agency. Kashmiri women have shown their agency as actors within the structures of the conflict, making personal choices of resisting Indian occupation, but what drives them? To explain their behaviour I look at Social Identity Approaches, because they take an actor agency approach to the question of what creates conflict. Social identity approaches are rooted in Social Identity Theory (SIT) which says mainly two things: people need to feel like they belong and to do this they categorize the world in labels which makes it easier for them to decipher the chaos of life<sup>3</sup>. By defining the 'other' in to comprehensible labels, people also categorize themselves. "Social categorization must therefore be considered a system of orientation which creates and defines the individual's own place in society" (Tajfel, 1974:69)

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Devi Boerema Theory of Violent Conflict Paper- 1, p.1, 2017.

Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel to explain intergroup relations in a conflict situation, but “as it developed, it became a much broader social psychological theory of the role of self and identity in group and intergroup phenomena in general” (Hogg 2016:3). After Tajfel’s death John Turner and his colleagues elaborated on the cognitive focus of SIT to include a more intragroup analysis which is labelled as Social-categorization Theory. “Rather than seeing interpersonal and intergroup dynamics as opposite ends of a bipolar spectrum, the proponents of SCT characterized identity as operating at different levels of inclusiveness” (Hornsey 2008:208).

### *Social identity motivations.*

To explain why the women that I have interviewed ‘do what they do’, there are two motivational dynamics that are associated with Social Identity processes which are of interest to me. They give a theoretical frame to my empirical evidence.

The self-esteem hypothesis, which involves the idea that members of a group are most concerned about their self-esteem “One of the most distinctive features of group life and intergroup relations is that groups and their members go to great lengths to protect or promote their belief that “we” are better than “them” (Hogg 2016:9). However, in the last decade this idea has lost relevance due to a growing preference to look at group distinctiveness and self-definition as the motive for group behaviour (Hornsey 2008). This is what the approaches of Brewer and Hogg build on.

Mary Brewer questioned the final step in SIT which explains the step from in-group love to out-group hate based on the assumption that people need it to heighten their self-esteem. Brewer instead proposes the ‘Optimal distinctiveness theory’ which looks at the human species fundamental survival strategy of needed to belong and at the same time needed to differentiate within a group. “People try to strike a balance between two conflicting motives, for inclusion/sameness (satisfied by group membership) and distinctive- ness/uniqueness (satisfied by individuality)” (Hogg 2016:389).

As explored by David Hogg the motivation for group distinctiveness has been elaborated upon by claiming that many group processes are based on a sense of uncertainty about one owns identity. “Uncertainty– identity theory (Hogg 2007, 2012) is based on the premise that feeling uncertain about our world and in particular how to behave and how others will behave can be unsettling, even aversive” (Hogg 2016).

What I find fascinating about Hogg's optimistic approach to uncertainty about one's identity is that he claims that it makes people feel alive, and edgy. Uncertainty about one's own identity drives people to go out and make new connections (Hogg, 2007). At its worst this uncertainty causes anxiety and a feeling of being lost. The pursuit of reducing this uncertainty, can lead to group forming in an urge to better understand the world. Hogg finds that groups with a high entitativity are more successful in providing the security a person with an uncertain identity problem is looking for. "Entitativity is that property of a group, resting on clear boundaries, internal homogeneity, social interaction, clear internal structure, common goals, and common fate, which makes a group "groupy" (Hogg 2007:136).

While Hogg's theory helps to understand why people become extremists or terrorists, I am interested in this motivational process because my respondents often referred to loss of identity as an everyday experience. I am therefore interested in how this process can be applied to the lives of my respondents.

### *Connecting the theory on the framework a gendered critique of securitization*

To conclude the theoretical framework for this chapter that aims to answer why women resist occupation by Indian armed forces, I connect the motivational processes of Social Identity Theory to my larger framework of exploring the effects of securitization through the gendered lens of Lene Hansen's two concepts of 'security of silence' and 'subsuming security'.

'Security', as defined by the Copenhagen School, is not only about survival, it is, as a general rule, about *collective* survival (Hansen 2000). To look at what threatens the group's survival it is important to look at what makes the group. The collective survival of women in Kashmir, as a group depends on their ability to voice their insecurities about attacks on their identities as women who are affected by the conflict. Hansen's concept of 'security of silence' would start out by asking if women are able to raise their voice to address this problem. In the structural context of living in a securitized region, can women raise questions about gendered-based insecurities?

Moreover, by bringing in the concept of 'subsuming security' we can further explore the multiplicity of this identity. By accepting that women, of a certain age, with a particular religious identity, experience the effects of conflict differently, they are allowed to distinguish themselves within the larger group of Kashmiri citizens. Hansen explains how securitization's limited view of the referent object (a group that can make a legitimate claim to be threatened) has excluded women. She claims that to understand the

complexities of the harm that is done to women in conflict situations “we need to take the inter-linkage of the gendered security problem seriously” (Hansen 2000:299).

### Case study – searching for a secure identity, shaping resistance.

*“When your identity is being targeted, when you are being killed for being a Kashmiri, you are not safe whether or not you speak up against them. Then it’s better to speak up against them than to be silent and be killed for no reason”<sup>4</sup>*

I spoke to Faiqa, a student, one sun filled morning on the lawns outside the main auditorium of Kashmir University. The last days of winter had barely passed, yet the sun was already out in full force, leading us to take cover in the shade of one of the palm trees. Faiqa would repeat throughout the interview that women’s participation in protests was not a new thing in Kashmir. However, she did agree with the larger media consensus that what happened during the student protests of last year was different from before.

*“There was this notion about our struggle that it is fought by men, that women rarely have a role to play in this. Whereas women have been constant sufferers [...] That notion was broken, shattered to pieces at that point of time. It happened because you can tolerate up to a certain level, but when that level is crossed it becomes impossible for you to deal with things.”<sup>5</sup>*

She says about the reason why female students came out to protest last year as a reaction to the army’s attack on a college in Pulwama. She is one of those protesters. During my interviews with students, members of a civil rights organisation, journalists, and women who have lost family members, two things stood out when I asked them about what motivates them to use the platform they use to resist occupation. Their actions were often strongly linked to a sense of identity, even though they also spoke about having to find that identity while growing up through key moments in the Kashmiri resistance history, and the feeling they need to defend that identity. Secondly, I found that the question of why they do what they do was intrinsically linked to the way they see themselves within their own society. Over and over again women would talk about their form of preferred resistance in reference to the social background that they come from. In some cases they were very aware of how their loved ones would

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<sup>4</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.1, Kashmir University, Hazratbal, 24-03-2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

view their actions and therefore chose not to tell them, in other instances their preferred form of resistance was silently accepted.

By bringing the two processes of Social Identity Theory, Uncertain-identity and Optimal Distinctiveness, together with my case study, I aim to address this complexity. On the one hand women resist occupation because they see it as an attack on their identity as a group and it helps them connect as a Kashmiri speaking out against Indian occupation, on the other they fight for acceptance of their distinct identity within Kashmir society as women who resist.

### *Loss of identity – out-group / inter-group resistance.*

As a motivation for intergroup behaviour David Hogg uses Uncertain-identity Theory to explain why people join or form groups. As Faiqa pointed out women have always been a part of the resistance movement, however they are aligning themselves in new ways with their group through new forms of resistance. When the Kashmiri identity of Kashmiri society as a whole increasingly is threatened, (partly) due to the fact that a whole generation has grown up with the sad realities of the AFSPA, more women feel motivated to join in a more visible way. An attack on fellow students, in the case of the Pulwama college attack, made female students realize as Faiqa explains, that a line has been crossed.

*“It is not just the responsibility of men, that women need to be, need to occupy spaces as much as men do. That we need to be there and ask for something which is rightly ours”<sup>6</sup>*

A recurring theme during my interviews with women from all four of my focus groups, was how they grew into that identity of feeling as a Kashmiri woman you have something to fight for. Major protests in 2008 and 2010 were for many defining moments. Most of the women that I interviewed were born in the early to middle part of the 1990s, these protests came at a time in their life where they were starting to question the society they lived in. As young adults do. Parmita, also a student, explained this well:

*“Given the fact that we were born at the outset of the conflict and we saw it through three conflicts, in terms of 2008, 2010, 2016 and then 2017. On our way to adulthood we have seen a*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*lot of conflict and that definitely is going to reflect in our actions, in our opinions, in who we choose to become”<sup>7</sup>.*

She also includes the most recent protests in 2016 when the killing of a young militant called Burhan Wani caused for protests throughout the summer, and a complete shutdown of the valley all through to the beginning of the following year. For the post 1990s generation the conflict has shaped their identities in a way that it never happened before. The complete impunity with which the army can act has showed them that their identity is under threat from a very young age. Who they *choose to become*, is a reaction to that realisation.

*“I was two years old when my grandfather was shot. I have a blurred image of it, these things have become normal to us. My uncle went missing in 1992. He went for work and from that day we had no contact. So, everyone is affected, it’s not like poor or rich. Every home has its own story”<sup>8</sup>*

My interviews with women in Kashmir confirm this idea that Jahida pointed out to me, the atrocities that are happening since the 1990s are of such an extent that everyone has lost someone. All of the women I spoke to, spoke of loss and how that had stayed with them, in some cases it started the process of questioning what was happening in Kashmir, for others it made them even more a part of a society that was already collectively grieving. Now it meant they just had a personal loss to add.

This sense of loss that kept on returning in my interviews made me think of Hogg’s idea of entitativity, can loss make a group ‘groupy’? In a Kashmiri context, the way these women described it to me I feel that it can. This shared identity of loss, and a form of loss that is experienced as so unfair and random, creates a sense of group belonging. In my interviews this showed as well through the connections between stories I heard. The protests of 2010 for example came after the death of a 17-year-old student named Tufail Ahmad Mattoo, who was walking to school. I spoke to one of his family members, but what struck me was that the sense of loss and impact she described over that event was mirrored by some of my other respondents. Though not family, the loss of his life and the events that followed haunted them just as

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<sup>7</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.5, Kashmir University, Hazratbal, 20-03-21.

<sup>8</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.10, ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge, 18-04-2018.

much. It shaped them into women who felt motivated to protest for a future of Kashmir in which these events do not happen again.

### *Identity differentiation – in-group resistance*

Wareesha works for a human rights organisation in Srinagar, she was kind enough to meet with me at her office. We spoke about how she along with a group of other female human rights advocates mobilized a group of women to defend the rights of the victims of a well-known incident of mass rape that occurred in 1991. It was a year after the AFSPA was introduced. In the villages of Kunan and Poshpura<sup>9</sup> during one night all the men were dragged out of their houses to be interrogated and tortured, the women and girls were systematically raped by the Indian armed forces. No one was ever charged, but Wareesha's group came together in an attempt to reopen their case in court and get justice. About 50 women joined the court petition. She explained how small acts of resistance for the women who joined the petition were not only directed against the government, but also questioned their own place in Kashmiri society

*“I personally know a lot of them, I know they have histories of being oppressed in the sense that, you know you are a woman and you're in this society and you are kind of oppressed. [they] were doing something for women who had raised their voice against great injustice done to them. For them I think it was, you know those small acts of resistance. Small acts of rebellion. In doing something for the women of Kunan Poshpura they were doing something to liberate themselves too. Doing something that the society thinks is taboo, but you take a step and you do something.”<sup>10</sup>*

Wareesha's colleague Sabriyah in a different interview I had with her explained that the Kunan Poshpura campaign motivates women to resist what is happening in Kashmir society not only based on the identity of being Kashmiri, but more specifically being a Kashmiri woman.

*“See because as a Kashmiri woman you also identify with the campaign because the campaign is just not about the mass rapes at K&P but is also a larger campaign where we're trying to raise questions about why is there so much impunity about sexual crimes especially why has there been*

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<sup>9</sup> Because the village of Kunan and Poshpura are considered twin villages they are also referred to as a single entity 'Kunan Poshpora'.

<sup>10</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.22, At the office, Secret location, 05-03-2018.

*no justice or no movement on those cases at all. It is also questions like that, and these are questions that one as having grown up here, and as a Kashmiri woman I identify with.*<sup>11</sup>

The experiences of Wareesha and Sabriyah as they told them to me lead me to believe that Brewer's Optimal Distinctiveness Theory is valuable to explain how women need to emphasize, or use, their distinct identity within the group. The need to gain this distinctiveness in society is not a self-serving one, in the sense that it elevates their status, quite the opposite. It is a survival strategy to raise their voices in a structure that has less understanding of the everyday violence Kashmiri women experience as a result of the conflict. As my interviews showed, even if the issue of sexual violence or loss of a husband are accepted topics to raise your voice about as a woman, the barriers of what is expected are still drawn by a patriarchal society. Talking about the student protest of last year April Wareesha explained what she thought about the debate that ensued about the role of women in those protests and its shaping by men.

*"That this is not our culture that it is the men who have to go out and pelt stones and be in direct physical contact with the armed forces. It was like, you are our sisters you are our daughters you can stay at home you can resist in other ways. You can write about it, but it is our responsibility to be out there. So, men have kind of defined what is their role in resistance. What is the domain of the men and what is the domain of the women."*<sup>12</sup>

In this way my interviews demonstrate a connection between the idea of identity distinctiveness and both Lene Hansen's concepts of 'security of silence' and 'subsuming security'. Women of this generation see a need to bring in a female angle that might not have been there before. While women did participate in protests and resistance in other forms, my interviews pointed out that this generation was more aware of taking the female approach to the conflict. Not just to be present, but to use the intersection of their identity to view the conflict and draw attention to what it means for women specifically. As Dunya, one of only two female photojournalists working in Kashmir on the conflict explained to me,

*"There should be a female perspective of everything, if there is a conflict there should be a female perspective. There were only males who were taking pictures, of protesters. There was no female*

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<sup>11</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.21, At the office, Secret location, 08-03-2018.

<sup>12</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.22, At the office, Secret location, 05-03-2018.



*perspective, I gave a female perspective to society. I think about that when I work, my pictures should speak differently”.*<sup>13</sup>

In the face of the patriarchal culture that Wareesha described to me, the women I spoke to for this research emphasized the opposition they experienced to define themselves specifically as women living in a conflict zone. This was partly due to an important side effect that the AFSPA has on their lives. The presence of army men everywhere in the city stationed at army posts and camps, has affected the sense of security especially for women. The Kunan Poshpura incident already demonstrated to Kashmiris that army men can attack women with impunity and on a daily basis women are verbally harassed by the men at these posts. Speaking openly against the Indian state, or its practices, in the public sphere often means having to leave the house to do your work, or protest visibly.

*“Growing up here we have seen many thing happening like, Hartal and curfews. Women then mostly stay in the house, meaning men can go anywhere in Kashmir mostly, at any time even after 7 pm or 8 pm, but women don’t and that’s kind of frustrating”*<sup>14</sup>

According to Bahar her parents continuously call her to ask her where she is and when she is coming home. Many of my other respondents confirmed this attitude of parents towards their daughter. It is exactly these structures that silence women. To break free from them women use their identity as Kashmiri women as strategy for resistance.

### Methodology – women talking to women.

I have chosen to address my methodological reflection on this research project in three separate parts, aligning them with each of my conceptual chapters. I do this to be able to reflect on the methodological choices I made in connection to the issue discussed in this chapter, and the analysis I made of my personal connection and therefore influence on the research. I will address this analysis in two separate parts, both connected specifically as explained in my research strategy on the topic of resistance.

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<sup>13</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.18, Zero Bridge, Jhelum river, 16-04-2018.

<sup>14</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.9, ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge, 18-04-2018.

## *Research design*

The qualitative research strategy that I have chosen for this research project allows me to work towards an understanding of my respondent's choices as an example of a case study. "Qualitative research is characterized by an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual" (Starman 2013:30). As A.B. Starman explains clearly, my aim is to understand the experiences of individuals, an open qualitative approach is therefore best suited for my research.

My selected group of respondents are divided over four focus groups. I selected the focus areas after two weeks in the field. My choice to focus on the lives of women working in the human rights field, working in media, students and women who joined the movement to commemorate people who have disappeared, was made based on the idea that my research question asks how securitization in the form of the AFSPA has influenced the mobilization strategy of women. After some preliminary research which comprised reading other research and talking to people in Srinagar, I came to the conclusion that these four groups mobilize on a daily basis around the effects of AFSPA and they all form an important part of shaping the public sphere, through their resistance within their profession or daily lives. Exploring interviewing from a feminist point of view, using standpoint theory as a method, means that talking to oppressed groups empowers them, because it values their experiences specifically as marginalized women (Harding 2004).

"In order to transform sociology - to write women and their diverse experiences into the discipline - we need to move toward new methods for writing about women's lives and activities without leaving sociology altogether" (DeVault 1990:96). Given that the aim of this research is to subvert the male centric voice in securitization theory by focusing on the female voice my research intentionally excludes male voices. As a female researcher talking about resistance from a female perspective with female respondents is valuable in its own way. DeVault's work explores the benefits of knowledge produced between females, because there is a mutual understanding that might not occur when a male researcher conducts the research. While I did talk to men in Srinagar about my research and listened to their ideas, they did not participate in the interviews that primarily shaped this research. In one incident for two brief interviews during a rally I had to rely on a male interpreter, however I felt that this reflected in the quality of the interviews and I chose not to use any of the content from these interviews as quotes, merely as background information.

### *Personal reflection*

I identify as a feminist researcher and therefore see the importance of placing myself in the research I have done. From a personal perspective, I identify with the women I have interviewed in the sense that I am of about the same age group as they are and, like them, I identify as a woman. However, I have never known oppression, or structural violence like they have. Talking to them about strategies of resistance therefore meant that I talked to them as an outsider.

Another important factor was the colour of my skin, I do look Indian and therefore visually I represent the oppressor. While everyone spoke to me openly and with nothing but respect, I noticed at some point that my respondents in between the lines viewed me as Indian. “You would say that” or “You would probably think that” my respondents would say during interviews, aligning me silently with the Indian viewpoint on Kashmir.

### *Conclusion – resistance as a need for survival.*

In this chapter my aim was to answer my sub-question which asks: ‘Why do women protest against the Indian government’s occupation of Kashmir in the form of the AFSPA?’ Guiding concept throughout was the concept of resistance, which I defined as the counter act of an attack on the self. Within Securitization Theory there is a blind spot regarding the lived experiences of women, the practices of resistance they develop as a response to securitization measures. Unfortunately, this blind spot of not seeing women as agency driven actors exists in a social context as well. It is important to discuss women’s reasons for resistance because incorporating their voices in any path to peace gives the process a higher chance of succeeding.

My theoretical approach to answering my sub-question looked at the two main motivational approaches of Social Identity Theory. As an actor based analytical framework SIT gave me the tools to look at why women resist Indian occupation in the form of the AFSPA. The concepts of ‘Uncertainty–identity Theory’ and ‘Optimal distinctiveness theory’ were extremely helpful to explain the main factors that the women I interviewed discussed as reasons for resistance. They experienced a fear of loss of identity as a group of being a Kashmiri at the same time they felt the need to establish their identity as women within their own society. Analysing these two motivational approaches in combination with Hansen’s critical framework of

‘silent security’ and ‘subsuming security’, gave me insight into how women’s voices are silenced as an effect of securitization.

My case study showed that the shared sense of loss creates a group feeling that made the women I interviewed feel more determined to raise their voice. Through my case studies I discussed how especially for the generation that is born after the implementation of the AFSPA this feeling became ingrained in them. Through a set of large uprisings that happened at key moments in their lives, paired with the constant awareness of the presence of military men who can act with impunity, these women present a group that takes part in the debate on their own terms, addressing specifically women’s needs as well. My case study showed that my participants are extremely aware of the need to bring in the female angle in to the discussion on the conflict. In my brief historical context of women’s resistance in Kashmir I discussed how women participated in resistance, but that did not necessarily mean that they fought for their own empowerment. This is changing, women resist based on their intersecting identities of being a Kashmiri, (Muslim) woman. The importance of a critical approach to securitization was visible in my case studies as well, because the effect of the AFSPA are not necessarily visible on the surface, one needs to dig deeper. They are in some cases extremely intricate, like my participants discussed how, based on their identity as young women, their family would police their abilities to participate in resistance more so than they do with male family members. Therefore, stepping out to resist as a woman was a defying act in itself, but I will discuss the tactics of mobilization and the use of public space further in the next two chapters. This chapter established the importance of seeing the reasons behind women’s resistance as coming from a multi-layered identity approach.

Talking about the reasons why these women felt motivated to resist government oppression and traditional ideas about gender, made me feel privileged as a Dutch woman. I have never felt the need to join any protests in the Netherlands, because my sense of self, sense of belonging has never come under pressure to an extent that I felt I needed to speak out. I consider this a privilege. I am thankful to my participants for taking the time, and having the patience to explain to me what it really means to live with this daily oppression.

I think my sub-question has established that women protest government oppression in the form of the AFSPA, because they feel a loss of identity and a need to separate their identity at the same time. I feel it is most important to see this double tight rope they walk as an extra burden on their wellbeing. Women

do not suffer less in conflict simply, because they have not picked up a gun. Conflict is not a contest of who suffers more, while often it is the men who are seen as the martyrs. It is important to address the double bind women experiences as repressive. They have to negotiate attacks on their group identity as well as fighting for a position within this group that is under attack. It makes me extremely hopeful to see that this debate is starting to happen in Kashmir. The women I spoke to all talked about the resistance they experience from society as a whole (not only men) to speak out as women in a public sphere. And there is no going back. My empirical starting point were the student riots of last year, this year though the same events happened. While I was in Srinagar new protests broke out which were led from the Women's College in the capital. Next to these protests, women like my respondents have dedicated their lives work to show the woman's voice in the conflict. I would like to suggest that future research will focus on the progression of this process, and look further into the connection between men and women in the shaping of this protest. Unfortunately, this was not within the scope of my research.

After analysing the reasons behind *why* women protest, I will look in the following chapter at *how* women mobilize to shape their resistance.

## Chapter three - Mobilization

*'How do women mobilize to shape their resistance against Indian occupation of Kashmir in the form of AFSPA?'*

After analysing in the previous chapter *why* women in Kashmir are motivated to protest, I will now look specifically at the tools my respondents use and strategies they apply to protest. This chapter looks at *how* women use social media to speak out. As Lene Hansen points through her concepts the barriers they face are multiple and complicated. Social media seems to provide a tool allowing women to mobilize around claims that address their lives in a securitized conflict zone. From a social point of view it is important to look at how women mobilize, because it examines the oppression they experience from society. Their strategies are different from men's because their lives are differently affected by securitization.

However, before exploring the academic debate on theories of mobilization and the effects of social media, it is important to first understand the main concept of this chapter; mobilization.

The word 'mobile' within mobilization signifies movement, towards something or of something. This could be a government's aim to mobilize troops to enter in to a conflict, or it could be the movement of an idea to prominence backed by a group of people. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow define mobilization as "an increase of the resources available to a political actor for collective making of claims" (Tilly&Tarrow 2015:120). Which I interpreted as the ability of women in Kashmir to collectively make claims about their lives. In this chapter I will look specifically at the impact of social media as an available resource to make collective claims. The use of the angle of social media impact is based on my empirical observation of mobilization in Kashmir.

Sabriyah, who researches and supports mobilization of women through her work for a human rights organization in Srinagar, explained to me how women's mobilization can be defined according to two different approaches. "There is a formal way of doing it, where you engage with the state and the judiciary and there is also an informal way where you inform the community".<sup>15</sup> Sabriyah's organization mostly functions as a kind of watchdog that engages the government on their action in Kashmir with the

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<sup>15</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.21, At the office, Secret location, 08-03-2018.

aim to keep them from covering up any human rights violations. The organization also functions as an informant to the community by keeping the memories alive about the details of the conflict. My research has focused on the informal intersection of these two strategies that Sabriyah describes, women engage the state through protest and inform the community at the same time by making their claims known to a larger audience. Looking at women's formal engagement with the state, through for example bringing their complaints before a court was unfortunately outside the scope of this research project.

### Historical perspective on social media as a resource for mobilization in Kashmir.

When the chief minister of Kashmir Omar Abdullah became the first Twitter user in Kashmir he was berated by many for considering the platform a useful communications tool (Tikoo Singh 2017). In those early days of social media adaptation Kashmiris would incidentally be on Facebook, mainly to keep in touch with Kashmiris outside the state. It was a platform to stay connected, not to mobilize. All that changed however during the riots of 2010, a Facebook group called 'Bekaar Jamaath' (idle group) changed its name into 'Aalaw' (a call). Its objective changed overnight from hosting discussions about Kashmiri culture and food, into a page that described itself as having an 'Islamic obligation'. The page drew millions of followers and was in part responsible for mobilizing people to join the 2010 protests (Tikoo Singh 2017). Five years later Hizbul Mujahidin commander Burhan Wani took social media use as a tool for resistance a step further when he started to post pictures of himself and other fighters posing with AK-47's. In 2016 he was killed by the Indian army. The last one of the men that posed in that famous picture with him, was killed earlier this year (Hussain 2018). According to the Indian police the group made it easier for them to track them down, since their social media presence made them easily traceable. It demonstrates how on the Indian side government institutions started to adapt to the social media being used by Kashmiris to subvert its power. After the death of Burhan Wani, many Kashmiris took to social media to express their sadness and support. However, it was not long before some Kashmiris started to notice their pictures being deleted or their accounts being blocked (Doshi 2016). In recent years Facebook has become more willing to block user accounts or take down posts that they view as inappropriate. The Indian government has made the total shutdown of social media part of their anti-terrorist strategy, shutting it down as soon as they suspect unrest. This has caused a total of 32

shutdowns in 2017, for this year the tracker is already at 26 shutdowns in the valley (Internet Shutdowns Tracker 2018)<sup>16</sup>.

Despite these shutdowns social media use in the valley has now reached a point where social media use is engrained in the conflict. Rather absurdly at times, people can take a Facebook quiz to find out which militant suits them personally for example. For militants themselves social media has become a trusted tool to announce their joining of a militant group. Days after their sudden disappearance, family members will await that post to inform them of their son's choice. Their concerned mothers have started to respond by in turn releasing videos in which they tearfully beg their sons to come home.

After a slow start, social media popularity has caught up in the valley. It is not only used by the militants to show a more human side of themselves, but government and human rights organisations have started to actively engage with Kashmiris as well.

### Theoretical approach - the impact of social media on Protracted Social Conflict

*Even when they stop us there is a lot of stuff happening on social media, a lot of writing happens. People from India, journalists from India writing about Kunan Poshpora questioning the Indian state what happened", Sabriyah explains.<sup>17</sup>*

I first stepped into the office of Sabriyah's organisation on the Remembrance Day of the Kunan and Poshpora mass rape incident, twenty-seven years ago. Over the years the organisation has been actively barred by the government from hosting any public activity that aims to remember the atrocities that happened that day. Last year a press conference was banned from taking place at the last moment, because the police claimed there was a threat to law and order. This year members of the organisation were stopped on their way to visit the towns of Kunan and Poshpora, in an attempt to show support with the victims. Not being able to mobilize in public space has forced the organisation to find new ways to prevent the government from erasing these human rights violations from public memory.

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<sup>16</sup> Internet Shutdowns Tracker is an online tool that tracks the number of shutdowns happening in India. <https://internetshutdowns.in>

<sup>17</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.21, At the office, Secret location, 08-03-2018.



As I sat there that first day at Sabriyah's office, I saw a team of human rights workers not fazed by the fact that they were confined to the office on such an important day. Instead they were determined to get the word out through social media, the sounds of their fingers hitting the keys of their laptops' keyboards would only be interrupted by conversations on what to write and how to shape it in an effective message. It gave me an overwhelming feeling of hope.

Researchers who consider the impact of social media on mobilization talk about its value in its simplicity and effectiveness. "The most fascinating ability of this new tool is that social media enables ordinary citizens to connect and organize themselves with little to no costs, and the world to bear witness" (Rohr Lopes 2014:2). While much research has been done to answer the question under what conditions movements are likely to emerge, there is a growing body of work that looks at social media and its impact on the formation of social movements. The question to what extent social media is responsible for women's mobilization in Kashmir connects with my empirical starting point on the effect of social media on the April 2017 riots. However, reviewing my data, has led me to believe that the impact of social media on the mobilization of women in Kashmir is both bigger than I suspected and more complex than I initially thought. In this chapter I take the impact of social media on social movements as an angle, and let it interact with my overarching framework on the effects of securitization on women's lives.

Larger structural changes in society like changes in the global economy or decolonization may set the larger context, but in the end, it is humans who create conflict. Conflict is made by "first movers, who one day decided that 'enough is enough' and begin to plan a rebellion, and by the active involvement of 'followers' (Demmers 2017:45). Combining structural and agency based approaches to answer the question of why and how people mobilize for collective (violent) action against other groups, various scholars have worked on multi-causal explanations (Gurr 2015, Tarrow 2011, Tilly 2017). It is important to look at the interplay between structure and actors within multi-causal explanations of how conflict starts and what power relations play a role. The PSC model of Edward Azar provides an angle of structure and agency combined, its component parts are also recognizable in the context of my case study.

Edward Azar's work can be seen as the root of conflict theories that are understanding conflict as a dynamic and multileveled affair. His concept of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) looks at conflicts as the "prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation" (Ramsbotham et al.

2011:113 quotes Azar, 1991). It is strongly grounded in Human Needs theory which finds the reason for violent conflict in the individual need for identity, as people want to belong not compete (Demmers, 2017). This was discussed in the previous chapter on the need for women to find a secure identity as a group and individually within the group. Azar identifies PSCs as lingering conflicts, which applies to Kashmir that saw the 70-year anniversary of Indian troops entering the state last year. He also outlined four clusters of variables that he sees as preconditions for the transformation of conflicts to high levels of intensity (Ramsbotham et al. 2011). In all four of Azar's clusters I recognize the Kashmir conflict.

The first; *communal content*, focuses on the relationship of identity groups with the state. The Kashmir conflict centres on the divide between the predominantly Muslim population which is governed by a Hindu government. Second is the *deprivation of human needs*, as the underlying source for PSCs. Apart from identity, grievances in Kashmir are connected to a lack of economic opportunities and personal development through education and work. Thirdly Azar identifies *the state* "In a world in which the state has been endowed with authority to govern and use force where necessary to regulate society, to protect citizens and to provide collective goods, the state's role becomes a critical factor for frustration of individuals and identity group needs" (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:116). Through the implementation of the AFSPA in Kashmir, the state has given itself the power to use force how it sees fit, the effects of it have been severe for Kashmiris sense of security.

Finally, there are *international linkages* that take into account international influences on the intrastate conflict. In a Kashmiri context this international context can be seen through the India –Pakistan relations that have been under severe pressure ever since partition, mainly because India holds Pakistan responsible for stimulating and backing of militancy in the state.

As explained at the start of this chapter I am most interested in the impact of social media on mobilization mechanisms. However, these preconditions are not effective enough in itself to explain the move to action. To determine if conflict will happen Azar combines them in three process dynamics to determine the likelihood of conflict occurring. Taking these processes of; communal actions and strategies, state actions and strategies and built-in mechanisms of conflict I will bring them together with the data from my interviews that explores the impact social media has on these three processes.

### *Connection to the overarching framework.*

Placing this chapter within the larger framework of my thesis, I look at the effect of the securitization of Kashmir, through the use of the AFSPA, on the way women mobilize. This means that I approach the preconditions and processes Azar has set as a part of his PSC model, with a gendered lens. It allows me to focus on the questions of how the fact that the Indian government as well as Kashmiris working to subvert the government now see the value of social media tools effect the mobilization of women? Working though the speech act, I will also keep in mind the ability of women to speak about their lived experiences as women on social media platforms. Does social media provide women a platform to speak about their lived experiences of living in a conflict zone?

### Case study - mobilization influenced by social media

*“Somebody more senior to me organizes these protests, they make a Facebook page or anything of that sort. They add people from the universities to the page so then we get to know the time of the protests.”<sup>18</sup>*

When I spoke to Tibah, a student of a technology college in Srinagar, about the protests she had joined we had to speak on the phone. A WhatsApp message from a friend informed me that some riots had broken out and a Hartal was called, because of it we could not meet in person unfortunately. Over the phone Tibah spoke about the use of social media in a context of complexity that I had observed in other interviews as well. First, my respondents would describe to me how they would come to know about protests happening through Facebook or a WhatsApp group. However, when I asked them as a follow-up question about the importance of social media as a tool for their mobilization they denied the platforms has any significance. Still, I have specifically chosen to discuss the impact of social media on mobilization strategies, because its significance stood out to me through the way my respondents talked about it. My respondents would mostly use social media in three ways; first they would get information through social media, as Tibah explains, about protests that are happening or were scheduled to happen. Secondly, they would use it to mobilize people for their cause. Finally, they talked to me about using social media as a way to speak their minds, share thoughts and have debates about their ideas with friends.

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<sup>18</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.11, over phone, 22-04-2018.

*“How am I supposed to give credit to social media when so often the internet is snapped, the social media is snapped” Tahseenah says defiantly.<sup>19</sup>*

I understood this to mean that the power relations concerning the use of social media as a tool to mobilize and the government’s efforts to stop this mobilization, are complicated. Interestingly, when I asked Tahseenah about which options are accessible to women in Kashmir to speak out in public space she also told me

*“Personally, I have always used social media, and I also write. I’ve written a couple of blogs. And I have made friends in India who have these blogs, so I would write for them and I would also post it on one my social media accounts and in university we would try to have these small talks or small groups where we would come and have some debates, and talk to each other, because I personally feel it’s important that we talk. That we listen to each other.”<sup>20</sup>*

Tahseenah describes here in one quote the importance of social media along the three lines that I have specified. It helps her to share her ideas, she gets information from her network about protests and she mobilizes offline where these debates continue. The interplay of these mobilization mechanisms, the female experience and social media is the topic of this part of the chapter. Divided over the three processes Azar specifies in her PSC model, I will discuss what my respondents have told me about the strategies they use to mobilize and how in some cases that has been affected by social media.

### *Communal actions and strategies*

This first cluster, as developed by Azar looks at the spark for communal action, how it develops into strategies to mobilize. An important factor at this stage is the collective recognition of individual grievances. Many of my respondents described their personal everyday grievances as a result of living under the AFSPA as women, they also told me how difficult it is to make a larger audience understand the individual impact of it. A common counter-terrorism strategy through the AFSPA are for example crackdowns, they are officially meant to find militants hiding, or evidence of people supporting them. In reality these crackdowns have very different implications for women.

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<sup>19</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.6, over phone, 10-04-2018.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

*“Growing up we had crackdowns, they have come back for the last two years, so whenever there was a cordon and search operation [official term for crackdown] they will take the men out and leave the women in the house. There have been instances where there tends to be this sort of sexual [harassment]. They would make lewd remarks. Which is harassment as well. Going through your personal items, all women’s items, sanitary napkins, your undergarments. Going through each of them and in your presence, is also a sort of harassment. These never get recorded as rights violations, but these are the things that are affecting you.”* Human rights activist Sabriyah explains.<sup>21</sup>

The issue with grievances like this, that women in Kashmir experience as part of everyday life, is that it is very difficult to draw specific attention to them when the aim is to shame women into silence. When men define the public sphere it is a challenge for women to talk about experiences like these.

*“Personally, I have always felt that as a woman, I have not had a physical or metaphorical space to voice my opinions or just have them in the first place. For me it was always handed down by some masculine form or some male guardian.”*, Says Aamira, who started to share her poetry online as a way to express herself.<sup>22</sup>

She talked to me about the difficulties she faced with stepping out in public space in Kashmir because of the constant threat she feels of being sexually harassed by the army. That’s what her family warns her of and she reads about in the newspapers. She prefers the internet as a place to raise her voice also because of another reason

*“I have these ideas in my head that I as an urban upper-middle-class woman cannot go out. It is beneath me to partake in this movement in this form, I might be a part of it online, be an e-board warrior. Write articles about it, do research, but I don’t go and pelt stones, you know.”*<sup>23</sup>

Here again I recognize a double bind in my respondent’s experiences, of being shamed into silence by both the government and the social structures of the society they live in. While on the one hand both

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<sup>21</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.22, At the office, Secret location, 05-03-2018.

<sup>22</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.7, At the office, Over phone, 12-04-2018.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

women address the structures that are responsible for making it very difficult to raise your voice about your individual grievance as a woman, they also find ways to subvert this problem. Often the internet provides options to help them.

*“In the last two years, women and public spaces, the whole scenario has changed a lot. Women now they are coming out, a year back I would not have had an idea that I could form a group of five women who would work with me in an NGO. [to register an NGO, you need five board members] “It is only through social media that we connected as likeminded people. Only because of that we were able to materialize something.”<sup>24</sup>*

Qailah’s story, who works in media, about how she was able to register her own NGO that focuses on empowerment of women in Kashmir is one of those examples of how women are trying to get their individual experiences recognized by the larger collective.

Stories like these are sadly still an exception rather than the norm. What Aamira meant when she talked to me about the ‘masculine form’ in which protest is shaped, is that women’s mobilization is often linked to a masculine experience of conflict. Meaning women in the past have often raised their voices to defend male victims of needs and wants in a conflict. At the same time women’s topics are often dominated by male’s voices who police women’s space. During the final weeks of my stay in Srinagar the intricate details of this process became clear to me when an 8-year old Muslim girl was raped and murdered in Kathua, Jammu by a group of Hindu men. All but one of the about eight protests I witnessed where led by men, some even had only men partaking. While the issue concerned a female victim of violence by men, the main point of male dominated protests became the fact that the perpetrators where Hindu and the victim was Muslim.

These all male protests where often held in the late evening when less women are outside in Kashmir. It is hard to say if the men that organises these protests have considered the gendered implication of their decision to organise the protests at this time, but for me it was clear the issue of gender is secondary to the conflicts main line of division; religion. It also confirmed a lack of understanding of how important it is to create space for women to protest against violence against women. For women who come out to

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<sup>24</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.17, At Ahdoos Restaurant, Residency road 18-04-2018.

protests it can be an extremely disheartening experience when they do come out, to find men leading the protest erasing the gender angle or in some cases even speaking against women's rights when they lead a protest. This happened to Jihan's friend, she explained what happened when she witnessed her friend partake in a protest at their university a few years back:

*"He was just giving his speech and then suddenly he said, our sisters should not wear jeans, they should not wear t-shirts... and she was in the protest... and I was like please come out of this protest or we'll have a fight."<sup>25</sup>*

While both women laughed about the experience when they talked to me about it, it did make them more careful of protesting again they said. Effective leadership is needed, according to Azar, to move the spark to collective mobilization. At this point leadership that effectively represents women to a point that mobilized them to draw attention to their lived experiences, is missing in Kashmir. As well as a meaningful collective recognition of the individual grievances they experience.

### *State actions and strategies*

The state reaction to the mobilization of the women I spoke to through their work in media, human rights or as students and family members of missing persons, takes various forms. For some women it leads them to withdraw from public space. This is for example the case for the survivors of the Kunan and Poshpora mass rape. These women do not speak to media and researchers anymore, because they feel it has not helped their case. For others the government's response to public action, violent or not, gives them more motivation to continue their work. There are three important ways in which the Indian state reacts to women's mobilization. The first two I discuss are quite general for men and women, the third one is more gender specific.

Faiqa explained to me how the government has, on multiple occasions, brought her Facebook account down, and in another instance her Instagram account.

*"Once my account was banned in 2016, because I would openly write about [the conflict]. Second time my account was banned because I posted a FB profile picture of Burhan Wani, so it was*

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<sup>25</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.16, At Ahdoos Restaurant, Residency road, 18-04-2018

*brought down immediately. Then I created three accounts and I posted the same profile picture, and they were brought down immediately within seconds. Five of my social media accounts were brought down!”.*<sup>26</sup>

When she talks to me about it, it brings a smile to her face. She was shocked a bit when her Instagram account was brought down, because she did not expect this vigilance from the platform, with Facebook she has seen it with other friend’s accounts and had learned to deal with it. When I spoke to Faiqa, she was using a new Facebook account which she used to spread news of Kashmir University Student Union. KUSU is officially banned, but people like Faiqa keep it alive through online mobilization, since they are not able to meet in person anymore. In the past students have been expelled from school because they were found out as KUSU members, but now Faiqa says that does not really happen anymore. It is hard to catch a student union that officially does not exist anymore.

When the protests last year happened in April KUSU was an important force behind the mobilization. This is Faiqa again:

*[News about the protests] spread through Facebook when KUSU gave a call [to come out and join]. That was the day when students throughout the valley came out to protest. Had they been allowed to protest peacefully that very day I think it would have ended then and there. But since they were again in Srinagar, in every district they were teargassed, they were fired upon. That created more anger with them, and that’s how it kind of gained momentum and lasted for I guess a long time.”*<sup>27</sup>

The violent blocking of protest is another response from the state to mobilization. As a recent report by the UN, the first in its kind, describes the Indian army’s use of pellet guns as a severe violation of Kashmiris rights to protests (UN, 2018).

Finally, human rights worker Sabriyah, described to me the tactics behind the third strategy of the government that is more gender specific.

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<sup>26</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.1, Kashmir University, Hazratbal, 24-03-2018.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



*“Because cultural meanings ascribed to violations against women’s and men’s bodies are so different in themselves. The cultural connotations of it are very, very, different and this is something that India has used very, very, well. It is used as a tool to punish the whole community.”<sup>28</sup>*

She points out that there are human rights reports from the 1990s that claim that at least 15,000 rapes occurred at the hands of the army in Kashmir, but official reports by far do not match that number. Sexual assault, while men are also victims of it, is used as a tool specifically on women because it shames the whole community into silence. Rape reflects not only on the victim, but also on the honour of her male family members in Kashmir society. As an effect of the AFSPA no army man has ever been convicted of sexual assault, this gives further strength to the idea that state can carry out these actions with impunity.

### *Built-in mechanisms of conflict*

The institutionalization of conflict, because of the stress that the parties involved experience, dragging them in a circle of violence refers to these mechanisms as developed by Azar. Faiqa remembers how:

*“You would have videos of these protests; all these girl students being injured on FB. You would see it. So, obviously, it kind of created an anger, a furore within yourself: ‘what is happening’ they won’t spare even you now.”<sup>29</sup>*

Seeing violence that spreads more rapidly through social media nowadays mobilizes Kashmiris. Violence begets violence, within the built-in mechanisms of protracted social conflicts both actors find themselves in a downward spiral of violence. It is this zero sum outcome that, according to Azar characterizes PSCs. Students, maybe due to their age, and the fact that they are in a situation where peer pressure plays a role, are often the first group to react against government violence. As a response the government regularly closes down universities when they suspect an up rise in mobilization of civilians, for example after they carried out an anti-terrorism operation. In 2016 when Hizbul Mujahidin commander Burhan Wani was killed it led to the shutdown of universities. Busrah a student from the Women’s College in downtown Srinagar tells me:

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<sup>28</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.21, At the office, Secret location, 08-03-2018.

<sup>29</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.1, Kashmir University, Hazratbal, 24-03-2018.

*“People who are born in the 1990s have these stories. I am a graduate student, graduate school is three years here, but due to the conflict I have lost 1,5 year. Schools are closed and our exams were not held on time due to the conflict. During the unrest of 2016 we were home for about 9 to 10 months.”*<sup>30</sup>

Sitting at home, cut off from the world because the internet is shut down and media only reports government approved content, has brought a frustration to Kashmiri youth that has impacted their lives in a way that inspires new violence. For women the mechanism of this conflict works in a particular way, locking them in a circle of violence of their own. For women from very strict traditional Muslim families who do not want their children to study in India or work in government jobs, which are often the jobs that women go for, the future can be bleak. Bushrah as a student of the Women’s College has witnessed this with her friend and classmates:

*“They don’t care for their lives, they say we will die like Shaheed, we will die for our land. We are 13 girls in the class, 10 girls are stopping their studies after this, because they say there is nothing here in Kashmir. What will we do here, they ask. They say we will sit at home, because there is no future here. There are only three of my classmates who are going to continue their studies, and they go outside the state to do so. Education is the worst victim of the conflict, I feel.”*

Although many of my respondents have pointed out that more Kashmiri women have started to join the workforce than ever before, there is a significant group within the post-1990s generation that mobilizes out of lack of future perspective. As an effect of the circle of violence women’s opportunities for self-development are thus diminished.

## Methodology - participating in my research

Addressing my methodology separately in each chapter allows me to focus on various parts of my methodological choices more in-depth according to the conceptual topic of the chapter. Guiding in this chapter was the concept of mobilization. In trying to find an answer to the sub-question of how women mobilize I have made specific methodological choices and came to some reflections on my personal influence on the research, which I will address in this part of the chapter.

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<sup>30</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.12, Over phone, 22-04-2018.

### *Research design*

My research was not designed around my participation in a particular group or movement, this means I cannot refer to my research as specifically participatory research. Researchers working in the vein of participatory research have warned against a blurring of the term, which I do not intend to do (Cornwal and Jewkes, 1995). However, there are elements in my research's design that have been influenced by my presence as an observer. Which can be described as a participatory observation, and I like the definition of its strength in exploring local knowledge and perceptions that Cornwall and Jewkes give to it (1995). In a reflexive way I tried to experience the location of my research as much as possible through the eyes of my respondents. To explore the question of how women mobilize, I walked together with some of my respondents in some non-violent protests that were joined by women. I also went out to experience more violent situations, even though I did not see women actively participating in those events, I wanted to see for myself the lack of women in public space at those times, or the way women moved through this space without actively participating. I also connected with my respondents on social media platforms. I observed what kind of posts they shared and the interactions that came out of them. Some of my observations have made it into this thesis, many have not. Due to the word limit of this thesis I had to make choices about what to include and what not. I found that my participation in protests, and social media engagement has been most valuable to understand the wider context of the experiences my respondents spoke about. Often my experiences during these events led me to ask new questions during the interviews. It has been elementary in the shaping of this chapter and my understanding of how to theorize women's mobilization as responds to securitization measures.

### *Personal reflection*

It was impossible for me to blend in to the protests and violent riots I experienced as a local. My appearance stands out as clearly not being a local. I would also often carry a camera, which would make people think I was a journalist. I was okay with that assumption because it gave my presence validity. I do not believe my presences altered the structure of the events I witnessed, mostly because people are so used to press documenting their movements. I found this media game actually quite disturbing, often it would feel like a game when stone pelters would tell me where to stand because they said it would give me a better picture of their actions. As an outsider, I found it extremely hard to get to know when protests happened. In the first weeks it felt like I would either get caught in a protest by accident, or only read about it on social media. This made me aware of the intricate structure of this conflict, as an outsider you are caught up in it. As a Kashmiri your life revolves around it. I am extremely thankful to my

respondents who were so kind to informing me when new protests occurred and accompany me during some protests translating my questions to participants as we walked.

### Conclusion – the complexities of women’s mobilization.

The aim of this third chapter was to find the answer to the sub-question of how women mobilize to shape their resistance against Indian occupation of Kashmir in the form of AFSPA. I interpreted the guiding concept for this chapter, mobilization, as the ability of women in Kashmir to collectively make claims about their lives. Through my research I came to understand the importance of the impact of social media on women’s mobilization. It led me to take this angle as an important exploration throughout this chapter.

It has been valuable to explore the intersection of securitization, gender and social media even further because it shows that women are able to subvert certain oppressions they face through the use of social media. Bringing this back to the critical questions Lene Hansen asks about women’s ability to produce a speech act, social media can be seen as a catalyst for their voice and their offline mobilization. However, there is reason to be careful with cheering on the successful impact of social media, as my respondents pointed out social media can also be use by the government to oppress freedom of speech.

I used the theoretical framework of Edward Azar’s Protracted Social Conflicts model (PSCs) to analyse the way women mobilize in Kashmir, based on interviews with my four focus groups. I was drawn to use Azar’s model because it so neatly fits to the case of Kashmir in the sense that the conflict has been going on for a long time, it centres around issues of identity and looks at people’s basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation. Throughout this chapter of course, my intervention was aimed at bringing the female voice to this model by specifically taking the lived experiences of women coming from Kashmir as my case study.

Looking at the history of social media use for mobilization in Kashmir gave a very male dominated overview. Media and research mostly talk about the success of militants like the Burhan Wani group to use social media as a way to generate a following. Unfortunately, I have not seen proof of female leadership developing with the help of social media, or in any way for that matter, along the same lines that militants have been able to make claims for their cause online. Which brings me to my case study.

To answer my questions of how women mobilize to shape their resistance against Indian occupation of Kashmir in the form of AFSPA, I broke my analysis down along three issues based on Azar's three process levels of dynamic conflict. Looking at communal actions and strategies of the women I interviewed, it became clear how complex the use of social media for mobilization is. By admitting its value the women I talked to realized it validated the government's move of blocking the internet to prevent mobilization from happening. Mobilizations happens, regardless of these shutdowns, but the fact that they cannot use social media at times impacts their lives. The complexity of mobilization for women was also addressed by my respondents who explained that offline protests is often male dominated. Anti-state protest can also at the same time have anti-women's rights elements. The internet provides a space where they can talk about these issues in a relatively safe space. It was unfortunately not within the scope of my research to analyse the male dominated feedback women experience online. In the weeks after I came back one of my respondents experienced such a backlash that centred around her position as a young female in the public sphere after a picture of her getting injured during a protest went viral. It would be my suggestion that future research focuses on the online movements of Kashmir women and their ability to speak out in the face of both patriarchal and state oppression.

Secondly, I looked at State actions and strategies, and found that the state oppresses women's ability to speak out in three ways. The blocking of social media, the blocking of protest from happening and the use of sexual violence as a tool to silence women. While it is already very difficult for women to mobilize, I found that the women I interviewed were defiant when they experienced blocking of social media or their protests. It made them more convinced of their resistance and the need to mobilize.

Finally, I looked at the circle of violence all actors involved find themselves in. For some women this circle gives them a very bleak outlook on life. The violence that happens influence their lives in the sense that education gets delayed, job opportunities diminish and some families feel a woman's future is within the home. With such future perspective, some women start mobilizing in violent protests because they feel there is nothing they have to lose.

Women's mobilization in Kashmir has been greatly impacted by the use of social media. Mostly it has given them a platform to get to know about protests happening, to share the opinions about the conflict and they have been able to use it to mobilize like-minded people around them. I am inspired by the way women have subverted the discouragement they experience through state oppression and patriarchal

oppression to raise their voices. Women have to fight against this double oppression they face by the state and their own society to mobilize. While my case study shows that there is a complex relationship between my respondents' experiences with the use of social media, I claim that it has been instrumental in their mobilization strategies and the success they have with making claims about women's issues within the structures of the conflict. When offline protest is often male dominated, online protests give women more agency and authority. More work should be done to look specifically at this intersection as a tool of resistance against securitization.

In the next chapter I will focus on what women's mobilization leads to, resistance in public space. And the use of that space specifically to subvert structures of power.

## Chapter four - Public space

How have women in Kashmir's capital Srinagar been using **public space** as a tool for resisting government oppression through the use of AFSPA?

In this chapter the use of public space by the women I have interviewed is explored as a tool for resistance against oppression by the Indian state in the form of the AFSPA. It matters to look at this specific use of space, because for women the shift from private to public is a road paved with barriers. As Lene Hansan addresses in her critique of securitization theory, it is too often assumed that women can speak about the oppression they face because their specific lived experiences are under reported and under researched. Throughout the long history of the conflict public space and the use of space in Kashmir has undergone various changes that have had its effect on gendered structures in society. Given the recent debate about women joining violent protests it is relevant to look at how it has historically developed and what the recent protests mean for the future of women's participation in public space and the debate surrounding it. Academically it is relevant to analyse the use of public space by women, because while an increasing number of researchers focus on the use of space by the post 1990s generation in Kashmir, still a more specific angle of the female experience within that group is lacking in academic writings. However, before exploring the academic debate on the use of public space as a tool for resistance, it is important to first understand the main concept of this chapter; public space.

Public space as a physical space is defined as the places where people come together intentionally to meet each other, or are unintentionally forced to interact with one another. Scholars who work on public space in this sense are, for example, concerned with the shape and dynamics of parks, malls and city squares. Public space defined as a meeting place of the minds is much more about discourse and scholars who explore the concept in this vein are exploring it as a place where thoughts and ideas are made visible to a larger public. In the theoretical part of this chapter I will explore these different approaches further in connection with the overarching framework of securitization and look at how feminist scholars have critiqued both approaches to include women as a group.

The aim of this chapter, as the final chapter of this thesis, is to analyse specifically the *why* and *how* of mobilization against AFSPA through the use of public space as a tool by women in Kashmir. In this way this final sub-question works closely towards answering the primary question of this research project by

bringing together elements of the previous two chapters. I aim to explore the concept of public space mostly in its physical sense, because my empirical starting point centres around the observation that young women have started to use public space as a physical concept in Kashmir differently than before. Added to that, my research made me understand how the AFSPA as a securitization tool strongly influences the use of public space for both men and women, but differently.

*“For women, because there is not a lot of what we can do politically, we are trying to occupy public space through civil society organizations. I definitely do see a difference with every passing generation, there is a sentiment to do something for Kashmir”*

My respondents spoke about the difficulties they face when they try to join the often male-dominated debates - in a public setting or even just in their own living room during family conversations - like the political future of Kashmir. Women, my respondents pointed out, are often asked to join public debates or rallies only when the issue is about women specifically, not when it concerns the whole society. Which women obviously are just as much a part of as men are. Particularly for the women working at the human rights organisations I interviewed, their strategies around using public space as a tool to engage with the government are constantly negotiated along issues of gender as explained by human rights worker Gulshan in this quote above.<sup>31</sup>

The audience’s reception of a securitizing speech act is very important within securitization theory. Women are of course as much a part of that audience as men are. Through openly joining the public debate they let their opinions known.

### Historical perspective on the use of public space as a tool of resistance in Kashmir.

The use of public space in Kashmir has changed significantly since the start of the armed conflict at the end of the 1980s. The heavy militarization that followed in the 1990s with the implementation of the ASFPA has furthermore shaped the use of public space. “The restrictions on public gatherings through curfews and laws, which gave impunity to Indian armed forces, transformed public spaces into gendered ones” (Wasim Hassan 2018:1). An example of this is how movie theatres were first banned by Islamic extremists, then taken over by the Indian army to function as army basis. It is in the public space were

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<sup>31</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.23, At the office, Secret location, 07-03-2018.



people (of the opposite sex) meet and share ideas about how to construct society. My respondents have described to me how difficult it is for young men and women to interact when these kinds of safe havens where privacy is assured are disappearing from the city. Wasim Hassan writes about how public space during the growth of Indian army presence was disappearing because of the restrictions on people's movements by the army and the actual disappearance of places to meet because the army claimed them as a basis. Out in public young people's movements are policed by society, the conflict took away a lot of their options to interact safely inside the walls of a theatre or coffee shop. The disappearance of public space led to a gendered form of resistance partly because Kashmiri's could now only gather in holy places like mosques and shrines. In these places men and women interact separately. The gendering of resistance in itself was not something new, at the start of the resistance movement there have been accounts of women participating in public resistance as caretakers of militants and food providers of active protests. Women were also part of political movements and there was even a women's defence group (Wasim Hassan 2018). It can be said that the gendering of public sphere resistance happened in waves, with the post-1990 generation forming the most current wave. "The post-1990 era saw women subverting the public space where apart from being survivors of violence and relatives of martyrs, they have actively been part of the protests, demonstrations and members of the organisations" (Wasim Hassan 2018:9). While they were aware of their position of being a woman and made claims based on that identity, my respondents worked to overcome the gendered nature of the resistance movement, which I will further discuss in the case study part of this chapter.

### Theoretical approach – production of space through three spatial moments

Public space as the centre of a city forms its beating heart, it is where people meet others who are not like themselves and are forced to interact (Nemeth and Hollander 2010). Scholars who work on theories about urban planning approach public space as a physical concept that can be negotiated through the strategic planning of landscape. The spaces their work focuses on are the areas that people use to come together and interact, parks, markets, malls and squares for example. It is not just the communal character of a public space that makes it so important, according to anthropologist Setha Low, it is also of political importance. She finds that diverse political agendas become embedded in vital urban spaces (Goodsell 2003:364) and public space should therefore be considered as "one of the last democratic forums for dissent in a civil society" (Low 2000:240).

Coming from a philosophical angle theorists like Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas agree with Low's take on the democratic power driving public space. They are however less involved with the physical nature of public space and more interested in how discourse shapes it. In the public space, according to Arendt, "the affairs of the common world become publicly visible, and can be looked at from all sides and talked about" (Canovan 1985:620). For Arendt, the public realm is specifically the place for greater and time transcending public interests, private ones should be left within the four walls of the home. "As citizens, we share the public realm and share its interests: but the interests belong to the public realm rather than the people" (Canovan 1985:621). Especially feminist scholars who claim that 'the private is public' have criticized Arendt for this divide between public and private. It has been one of the main battles the feminist movement has fought to point out that the individual oppression that women face in the home matters on a broader scale, in the public arena, as well (Hanisch 2006).

While Arendt's public space is a scene of action, for Habermas it is more about public discourse. Habermas defines the concept of the bourgeois public sphere, "which made it possible to form a realm of public opinion that opposed state power and the powerful interests that were coming to shape bourgeois society" (Kellner 2014:3). This public space changed according to Habermas with the rise of capitalism and the welfare state to a space in which "public opinion is administered by political, economic, and media elites which manage public opinion as part of systems management and social control" (Kellner 2014:4).

Again, important criticism on Habermas' definition of the bourgeois public sphere comes from a feminist perspective. American historian Mary Ryan points out for example how Habermas' preferred public space was occupied by white males and completely neglected women's participation, ironically Habermas "marks the decline of the public sphere precisely at the moment [early twentieth century] when women were beginning to get political power and become actors" (Keller quotes Ryan 1992). This fear for the end or the loss of the public space involves often the concern for its democratic character and not the actual reduction of physical public space (Nemeth and Hollander 2010). However, for feminist theorists it has always been clear that public space was never democratic to start with, because men are allowed different access to it and privileges to use it than women do (Bondi and Domosh 1998). Therefore, the question about public space does not only involve the critical debate that shapes it, but also the physical use of space and how women are able to move in it.<sup>32</sup> This combined approach can be found in the work

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted from Devi Boerema Literature Review, 2018.

of scholars like Puneet Dhaliwal (2012), who looks at resistance and public space of mostly young people in Spain through the Indignados movement and Khalid Wasim Hassan (2018), who looks at gendered use of public space for resistance in Kashmir. Both use the work of Henri Lefebvre on the ‘theory of space’. What interests me in Lefebvre’s work is the tools it provides to look at space as a diverse and complicated space occupied by many actors with many different interests all colliding at the same time. It makes Lefebvre’s work extremely adaptable to protracted conflicts like the Kashmir conflict. For Lefebvre’s social space is a social product (Lefebvre 1991) and while that seems like a very logical thought, he claims that we tend to overlook public space as an entity that produces action. I particularly like this idea because it brings together the power of movement in public space as a physical concept and the sharing of thought that happens through it in a way of discourse. As Dhaliwal and Hassan have shown, this makes public space an interesting starting point to explore as a tool of resistance.

Lefebvre understands the process of production of space in a way of three spatial moments that affect each other simultaneously (Dhaliwal, 2012). First there is the *L’espace perçu*, which he describes as the production of space by its society (Lefebvre 1991). For Wasim Hassan this is the conceived space where power relations are fixed (Wasim Hassan 2018). Secondly there is *L’espace conçu*, which refers to space as how it is imagined, perceived as a space of social practices ‘The space of its inhabitants and users’ (Lefebvre 1991). As the third and final spatial moment Lefebvre defines *L’espace vécu* to mean space as it is lived and changed through time, it is at this spatial moment that space becomes a tool of resistance. My case study approaches the other two moments, which coincide with the lived space, as the introduction to more active resistance.

**Figure 3. Lefebvre’s three moments of time<sup>33</sup>**

spatial practice	<i>l’espace perçu</i>	perceived	physical	materialism
representations of space	<i>l’espace conçu</i>	conceived	mental	idealism
spaces of representation	<i>l’espace vécu</i>	lived	social	materialism & idealism

<sup>33</sup> Table reproduced by author.

Connecting this theory of Lefebvre to my case study I explore space as what it is (generated by the Indian government), what it could be (as imagined by my respondents) and how it is altered through its everyday use and experience (by Kashmiri women based on the experiences of my respondents).

## Case study - public space as a tool for resistance.

### *Scene one:*

*“This is my son, Manzoor Ahmed Wani.”*, Afrah holds up a small laminated card that has the name of her son together with his slightly faded picture printed on it. It hangs around her neck with a black thread, as if it was an access pass to some kind of event. Instead it marks her belonging to a group no one wants to belong to. On the top of the card it reads ‘where are our dear ones?’. *“In 2003 his [Manzoor’s] son was arrested and taken to the police station. After his son was released my son became wanted by the police. One day he told his younger brother that he was going to the police station to see if he would be arrested or questioned, after he went no one heard from him again.”*<sup>34</sup> Once a month the Association of Parents of Disappeared People (APDP) holds a gathering in Pratap Park for family members of disappeared people like Afrah. The park is conveniently located in the centre of the city right in front of the Press Enclave, where most journalists covering the region hang out. On days like these they come out to talk to the family members, mostly women, in Pratap Park. Afrah comes to the APDP rally every month even though she tells me that it is not easy for women like her to leave her homes, travel on her own and openly display her pain at every meeting. *“It is difficult for me to come out and be here as a woman and a mother, but I have to. My family members support me. They will watch the television this evening and see me here.”*<sup>35</sup> For Afrah it is the only way she knows how to keep the memory of her son alive for a larger audience. She feels that the government is not listening to her, by coming to the park she has the opportunity to tell the world that all she wants is the safe return of her son. She tells me that she does not want money, nor does she want to make any political claims, all she wants is her son to come home.

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<sup>34</sup> Respondent no.24, Pratap Park, MA Road, 28-04-2018.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



Association of Parents of Disappeared People, monthly protest at Pratap Park, Srinagar 28-04-2018

*Scene two:*

Around ten in the morning I get a phone call from Faiqa informing me that a protest is happening at Kashmir University complex. If I want to see it for myself I need to hurry up, because she does not know how long the students will protest; she tells me. For days now protests have been happening, but I always find out too late to join as an observant. When I arrive at the university grounds Faiqa and I silently join the back of the protest, this is where the women walk. A group of men in the front take turns shouting slogans.

*“We want our authorities to give us confirmation about our classmate, where has he gone?”*

Aaqilah, who walks close by us in the back, explains to me why this protest has been happening for the last few days.<sup>36</sup>

Their classmate has disappeared, in the absence of a social media post announcing his joining of a separatist group, most students believe he has been taken by the government. Aaqilah tells me how these protests start:

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<sup>36</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.2, Kashmir University, Hazratbal, 02-04-2018

*“First, we go to other classrooms and ask permission from the teachers, when they allow us students from other departments start coming out and join us”.<sup>37</sup>*

Together with the other women we follow our route through the university grounds. When we finally reach one of the gates, which has been closed to make sure the students stay inside the grounds, the group halts. After the male protest leader has repeated his demand to get information about his missing friend, he leads the group in a silent prayer for his safe return. I take some pictures of the women comforting each other, soon the crowd breaks up. Men and women go their separate ways, back to class.



Student protest inside the Kashmir University grounds on 02-04-2018.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

These two scenes that I described above show how varied the use of public space as a tool of resistance is. Family members of disappeared people who come to Pratap Park use space in a very structured way in which time and location are set every month. For these women their resistance comes in a form of remembrance, preventing the world from forgetting. They depend on the media to show their call for more information about the whereabouts of their loved ones. The students in the protest I visited make the same call, they too want more information about missing loved ones, but they use the space they have in a much less organized way. Their protest is spontaneous and is very dependent on the limits the university sets. Their call does not go out to media, but the school's leadership which they hold responsible for addressing the issue of their missing classmate to local government.

These are just two examples of protests I have witnessed myself, to demonstrate that although the aim might be the same, the structure of these protests and use of space is diverse. I did not witness the more violent protests that saw female student throwing stones at army personnel during my stay in Srinagar. Every Kashmiri's experience of the conflict is different, they lead different lives and have different needs and this is reflected in the way they use public space. These two scenes proof this. Lefebvre's triad of spatial moments gives the tools to address the use of space for resistance in this complex way. As he explains his concept multiple characters of space intersect at the same time, in the same way that multiple identities and motivations of protesters shape it. In the following part of this final chapter I explore my respondents lived experiences, as they have told them to me, along the lines of the three concepts of space as Lefebvre has defined them.

### *Conceived space as a space where power relations are fixed.*

The conceived space is the space of the people that have power to shape it, planners, engineers, scientists and the government through designs and laws. Women are often not those people who get to make these decisions about space, because they are traditionally male dominated fields. As feminist critiques on theory of public spaces as a physical concept has showed public space is never viewed by them as a democratic space to start with because of how it is conceived. Throughout the interviews I had with my respondents they would share memories of how they experience public space as a space conceived by others, and how that affected their lives. Often starting from a very young age, for Dunya it was for example right at her birth.

*“I am a conflict born child. When my mother was pregnant, there was curfew all around Kashmir, it was 1994. She has to go to the hospital and they didn’t allow my father to come with my mother so my grandmother was the only person who was allowed to go with her. There is a Muslim tradition, when the baby is born they recite Azan (prayer) in the ears of the baby. Mostly the male relatives do that, but there was no one who could. My grandmother recited Azan in my ear instead.”<sup>38</sup>*

The conceived rules and regulations of public space in Srinagar, implemented by the Indian government, prevented Dunya’s father for three days to come see his new-born daughter in the hospital. Dunya is now one of only two female photojournalists in Kashmir getting steady work. She believes the strength she has to show on a daily basis, because she works in the male dominated space of media and is assigned to work in the hotbeds of the conflict, comes from that moment in the hospital when her grandmother whispered the Azan instead of a male family member. The ordering of curfews shapes public space according to rules and regulations made by the actor in power. Another way the government conceives the space that Kashmiri women have to live in is by simply being present. The fact that the Indian army has camps or posts on many street corners in Srinagar shapes the space as one where again power relations become fixed.

*“When I had to walk from home to my school bus stop there was a very big army camp, my school bus stop was right next to the army camp and I remember my parents wanted me to wear a layer on top of my t-shirt [when we had sport class and would not wear our school uniform], because you have to pass that army camp. The army men are watching you, it is all the time that gaze that affects you in so many ways, that gaze is in your wardrobe as well.” Sabriya memories about growing up with that army presences.<sup>39</sup>*

This presence of the dominant actor can also trigger the mobilization of resistance movements turning the conceived space into a space of resistance. Thus, showing the interaction between Lefebvre’s spatial moments.

A common idea that I heard from many Kashmiri’s, and was reflected by some of my respondents as well, is that stone pelting by female students all started with one woman last year. Afshan a young

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<sup>38</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.18, Zero Bridge, Jhelum river, 16-04-2018.

<sup>39</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.17, Ahdoos Restaurant, 18-04-2018.



football coach is labelled as the first woman stone pelter by some, because of the media attention her actions received. However, when I met Afshan it became clear to me that her motives had nothing to do with politics, a call for Azadi. Instead it was a direct reaction to the policing of public space by the government.

*“We were traveling to our sports ground and some policemen stopped us and started abusing us. He said that ‘you girls are protesting here’ I said ‘are you serious?’ We are sports persons and you are talking to us like this, why? I don’t know what happened but then he slapped one of my students”*

Afshan explain how she picked up a stone out of anger because of the way her students were approached by the police.<sup>40</sup> Ironically Afshan regrets that more girls have followed her lead, because she does not feel pelting stones is a productive way to make your grievances known. However, Afshan’s experiences shows how actions by the dominant forces in a space conceived by those same actors, especially in a conflict zone, can easily snowball in to a wider movement of resistance. In this case by female students who took Afshan’s actions as an example.

### *Perceived space, where space is imagined as how it could be*

If the conceived space is the way a space is shaped by actors in power, the perceived space is the way the people who have to act in that space imagine it. The performance they give on a daily basis in that space, to comply with the way it was conceived and how they like to see it changed. I found it interesting that the way my respondents imagined the space, was tightly connected to the stories they heard about passed use of that same space. Because of the AFSPA the public space is regulated differently now then it was before the 1990s when their parents were the same age as they my respondents are now.

*“[My mother] said that when we were your age we used to go out for weddings at night, it is different now. They used to go to picnics, they used to roam, it was not like that society back then, it wasn’t conservative, it was quite open. Now since 1990s I guess, the society has changed a lot. They have lived their lives at most, we have not.”<sup>41</sup>*, Jahida explains.

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<sup>40</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.30, Afshan Bagel Shop, Bandra, Mumbai, 27-04-2018.

<sup>41</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.10, ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge, 18-04-2018.

Another respondent named Jihan had a similar story to share of how her mother and aunts grew up pre-1990 in Srinagar.

*“When I see their photos, it is like they are living in 2018 Mumbai and I feel like I am living in 2018 Pakistan. You see the difference so clear in picture, it is a different lifestyle, different clothes, and nobody was bothered. But what happened with our generation, we remained confined to one way of thinking.”<sup>42</sup>*

Comparing their use of space to the memories of their parents about how they experienced public space made them re-imagine the current possibilities of public space in Kashmir. Some of my respondents connected this change to Kashmir society’s adapting of stricter religious rules as a counter reaction to securitization. This has predominately effected women, because it led to them becoming more restricted to use public space. Apart from reminiscing through memories and old photos, the respondents I interviewed from the media focus group discussed another way of using, while at the same time, imagining public space as a way to deal with how it is conceived now. Though the use of words journalists can actively re-imagine public space. Public space as discourse is also shaped by the same notion of more powerful actors who have more influence than others over the debate. Indian media houses conceive in large part the space of news coming out of Kashmir. They are on opposite ends with smaller local news organisations that cater to a Kashmiri audience. Insaf is a writer for a local online news medium.

*“Here in local media you will see the word ‘militants’ in Delhi-based media it will show it as ‘terrorists’. We will write ‘armed forces’ they write ‘Jawans’. Which means a courageous person, someone who fights for the nation, for the good of the nation”.<sup>43</sup>*

While the Indian government conceives space through its implementation of laws, and spatial design of army post throughout the city, Kashmiris move through this space. They cannot change the structures, but they can give, to a certain extent, meaning to it. While some students spoke about their parent’s youth and my respondents in media used words, this can also be done through images. By sharing pictures for example of their lives in Kashmir on social media platforms, or talking about their experiences

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<sup>42</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.16, Ahdoos Restaurant, Residency road, 18-04-2018.

<sup>43</sup> Author’s interview with respondent no.15, Ahdoos Restaurant, Residency road, 18-04-2018.

in poems. I was surprised to find that a large number of my respondents tried their hand at poetry and used different ways to spread their work. I am specifically mentioning this in this chapter because I do not think it was used to mobilize people for a cause or claim an identity within a group. The way I interpreted their stories as they told them to me, I understood it more as an act of making sense of the world which is done in this particular spatial moment. Bahar, who is a student has an amazing talent for art and photography which she shares on her social media accounts.

*"I am active on FB and Twitter, but I use it to express myself. I don't use conflict as a tool, I don't like this political stuff".<sup>44</sup> It's not political, but it is a very important way for her to interpret the space she lives in.<sup>45</sup>*

### *Lived space which is the space primarily for resistance.*

The fact that this generation is very much aware that public space in Kashmir has changed is an important reason that inspires them to resist the status quo. It is in this third shape of space that Lefebvre defines, that people act to change space in an active way. Actions that alter the way the space was originally conceived of by the dominant actors. The park that APDP protests every month or the school grounds that the students march along are designed by the actors in power, but are now used to make claims against them. In my two examples there was no counter response by the Indian government, however this is not always the case. Human rights worker, Sabriyah explains that tactics of sit down protests or large gatherings meant to be peaceful do not always work out that way.

*"The fact is that a lot of these tactics haven't worked because the state responds so violently. They will come with their pellet guns, and guns, they will be shoot at side orders. And people will have to go inside. [This impunity makes them think that] maybe it is not a good idea for me to speak out at all. But having said that, that doesn't mean that people have not."<sup>46</sup>*

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<sup>44</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.9, ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge, 18-04-2018.

<sup>45</sup> Bahar was kind enough to let me use her art for the front cover of this thesis.

<sup>46</sup> Author's interview with respondent no.21, At the office, Secret location, 08-03-2018.

In a recent UN report<sup>47</sup> a special mention is made about the intense harm done by pellet guns. Guns that spray dozens of tiny rubber bullets have caused devastating injuries often causing lasting damage to the eyes. It has a severe impact on Kashmiri's rights to peacefully protest. A story Dunya told me demonstrates how women still resist in the face of this violence.

*"I was covering a protest with women. They were abusing a police man saying: 'you have shot dead my brother, give me my brother back. I will put down the stone' and then the cop says: 'throw the stone at me', then she said 'give me your gun I will show you'."*<sup>48</sup>

Women talking back to the forces that oppress them change the conceived space they live in. While this example shows that use of space in a very direct and aggressive way many respondents also talked about a more slow and silent way in which public space is currently changing in Srinagar. In the capital the rise of the a café culture is, for example, slowly but steadily changing public spaces. Not only does it change the shape of the public space, but my respondents also talked about the way it is changing society. Qailah told me how the rise of café's in Kashmir is still very new and important for her generation to interact.

*"Earlier if you wanted to meet a friend, you would first have to think about finding a space where you could sit. If you sat in a park with a guy, there would be people morally policing you. Inside a café you are safer to interact with the opposite sex so the café provides a safe space. Like we are sitting here now, I could not have imagined this five years back."*<sup>49</sup>

Both ways of using public space as a tool of resistance are growing. More violent protests are happening while at the same time café's are popping up round Kashmir where people discuss their ideas about Kashmir society over a warm cup of kahwah. It is in both these situations that the three spatial moments of space come together. In the conceived space, under the shade of tree in parks and city centres where restaurants line the high-street or through online communities, where people decide to resist how the conflict has shaped their lives. The AFSPA heavily regulates the use of public space, but Kashmiri's growing sense of having nothing to lose anymore find ways to subvert though daily use. In the face of

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<sup>47</sup> Report can be found here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23198&LangID=E>

<sup>48</sup> Author's interview with respondent no. 18, Zero Bridge, Jhelum river, 16-04-2018

<sup>49</sup> Author's interview with respondent no. 17, Ahdoos Restaurant, 18-04-2018

violent counter reactions by the government to peaceful protests and enforced disappearances my respondents described using public space as a tool for resistance, because they can and they no longer fear the consequences of their actions.

### Methodology - The value of experiencing a sense of unsafeness

Addressing my methodology separately in each chapter allows me to focus on various parts of my methodological choices more in-depth according to the conceptual topic of the chapter. Guiding in this chapter was the use of public space, I would therefore like to reflect in this methodological part on my own use of public space versus that of my respondents. When my respondents spoke of feelings of unsafeness due to army presence, I couldn't really relate to that. Because I was identified as an outsider, but by living in Srinagar I did begin to understand a more general sense of unsafety as a woman living in the city.

### *Research design*

In the previous chapter I have discussed the use of participative observation in my research. My joining of protests as a silent observer, was part of that strategy. Apart from observing protest situations, this chapter was also shaped by my experience of public space through living in Srinagar for over two months. Philip Balsiger and Alexandre Lambelet discuss how living in a place and experiencing the location through living there is elementary in understanding your subjects' lives. "Researchers take part in the same situation in order to understand the contradiction, the stakes and the social expectations that people who are studied experience" (Balsinger, Lambelet, 2014). I agree with this in large parts, however I do think they assume that the researcher can totally immerse herself in the case study. This is not my experience. The boundaries between inside and outside never fade. However, I do like their understanding of participant observation as filling in the silences of your interviews. The things that cannot be said, one needs to experience as much as possible to understand those gaps. My respondents sense of safety and unsafety, as women moving through the city, is on such experience that can never be quiet understood.

To highlight this feeling of the need to be present to understand a situation, I have added pictures to this chapter. Using photography as a creative research tool also served for me a purpose of bringing my research closer to an outside audience, not just myself. However, I originally designed more space for photography in my research, due to personal experiences in the field I sadly did not manage to do that as I will explain in further detail in my personal reflection.

### *Personal reflection*

Living and working in Srinagar for a long period of time, longer than the few days any tourist would stay, made me more aware of the limitations public space has in Kashmir. I found it extremely stressful to have to negotiate public spaces as a woman and at the same time take into account the effects of the conflict. Shutdowns, curfews and increase of army presence during those moments made me experience the city every day in a different way. Apart from the effects of the conflict I experienced harassment from men on a daily basis. I have travelled around India extensively and never have experienced the stress I felt being outside in Srinagar. It is very invasive, the way men approach you, in my experience. I do not feel it is necessary to discuss my experiences in detail, because they are hardly anything in comparison to what my respondents have shared with me. The reason why I am addressing it at this point is because looking back I feel like it affected my functioning as a researcher in Kashmir. In my research proposal for example I had explained my intent to make an observation of public space in Srinagar through photography. I found that I did not like going out with my camera, because it attracted even more attention to me, attention that I did not want. Looking back from my safe desk in the Netherlands, while writing this thesis, I now realize that there are more things I wanted to do in public space in Kashmir, like sitting down for an afternoon and write in public space, that I just did not feel comfortable doing while I was there.

### **Conclusion – public space shapes resistance movement**

In this third and final chapter of my thesis my aim was to answer my sub-question on how women in Kashmir's capital Srinagar have been using public space as a tool for resisting government oppression through the use of AFSPA. I explained public space, as the guiding concept of this chapter, as both the physical space that people move in as well as the discourses and imaginative practices that happen. It is important to keep in mind the feminist critique on public space that it has excluded women in both approaches, because the larger aim of this thesis is to include women's voices. Through the work of Henri Lefebvre and his three spatial moments that affect each other simultaneously I have explored the use of public space as a tool of resistance.

Working through Lefebvre's three defined approaches to public space my case study showed that the way actors in power conceive public space in Kashmir impacts the lives of my respondents. Rules and regulations of space limit their movement. Women are often not the people that shape these spaces,

either through design or law making. The government conceives public space secondly through placing army camps throughout the city and region. My respondents spoke about the ways in which they negotiated the constant presence of army men in public space. My respondents were very aware of the fact that public space as it is now, is not how it has always been. They talked about a time when their parents' generation was able to move around more freely. This imagination of how space was, and how it could be once again, is an important part of Lefebvre's approach to space. Finally, what matters is the way women shape public space through living in this space. The forms of protests they organize in parks, on university campuses or on the streets of Srinagar, it all works towards a change of public space by being present and making your voice heard. It is in this third shape of Lefebvre's theory public space is predominantly used as a tool of resistance.

It is in this final chapter that the reason of why women protest and how they protest, discussed in the previous two chapters, comes together in the discussion how they do this specifically to alter the public sphere. Their physical presence alters parks and streets, their voices alter the debate. Looking at the ways that women are able to do this despite at times violent counter action by the Indian government, gives me hope for a more inclusive public space. It is interesting to see how the post 1990s generation is able to move in both spheres of public space. My respondents spoke about, and I also experienced this for myself, the various forms of protest. Students can protest from their university grounds, family members of disappeared people can make themselves heard through activists groups. Journalist use language in their articles to make their alliance known, and more cafés are opening up to allow Kashmiri's to meet and discuss. I conclude from this that there are options to occupy space in various ways. More violent protest, like stone pelting, is even an option for women now even though this is practiced by a small group and garners a lot of backlash. Women make use of the options that they have, and create new options through organizing events in public spaces.

My experiences of living in Srinagar, for the two-month period that I did my research, has also showed me the need for this subversion of public space. It is still very male dominated and not very welcoming to women. Women who want to use public space as a tool for resistance face oppression by the government and the traditional society. This double bind that I have been discussing throughout my research can be found here again. It would be valuable if future research focuses more on the complexities of fighting for women's rights in a conflict zone. My cast study shows that the question of

how to make claims as a woman in a conflict zone are tight to the status of women's rights within that society.

To conclude my answer to the sub-question posed in this chapter I think that public space is the sphere where women can make claims to question the effects of the AFSPA. Through protests (peaceful and more aggressive) local media reports, social media posts and debates or by simply meeting with friends in public they shape the debate about the future of Kashmir. Because for this generation in particular the freedom to use public space as they please is not a something they grew up with.



## Chapter five - Because they can.

### Conclusion

At the beginning of this year I came to Srinagar, because I had read about the surge in protests by young Kashmiri's. I was fascinated by the claim that in particular the rise of women's participation in these protests was seen as a marker for the changing face of Kashmiri resistance against Indian occupation. Given that barely any research has been done specifically on the generation of Kashmiri's that grew up after the implementation of the AFSPA, rolled out in the region in 1990, I was even more eager to come to Kashmir. However, what I found there was a quagmire of complexities. Which I quickly understood I would not be able to decipher in the three months I spend on field research in India. "Kashmir is like an onion", a Kashmiri friend told me early on in my stay, you peel away one layer only to find many more waiting for you to expose. It is fair to say that this thesis only represents a thin outer layer, there are more layers waiting under its surface that need to be carefully peeled away by future research projects.

Throughout this thesis my aim has been to analyse how the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has affected women who grew up under its shadow. Taking the student protests of 2017 as a starting point, I asked myself how the AFSPA has led women to mobilize using public space as a tool of resistance against Indian occupation. I first looked at identity and how the society wide threat of losing the Kashmiri identity inspired women to fight for a distinctive identity as women. My respondents told me that women joining protests was nothing new, however I noticed that their motives due seem to shift. Now women also protest to draw specific attention to their identity as victims and survivor of the conflict which indirectly means the effects of the AFSPA. I found that social media is a necessary tool my respondents used to mobilizing around the causes that matter to them. My respondents use social media as a tool to make claims about their situation, get to know about protests happening and mobilize people to gain wider support. The Indian government's blocking of social media made it difficult for my respondents to give the medium any real credit for its usefulness. It was however evident to me that all my respondents used it in one way or another and relied heavily on the social connections they made through social media platforms. Finally, I explored the use of public space, both as a physical and conceptual space, as a tool for resistance, because it is women's movements outside the private sphere that are changing the traditional society from within. Their presence, not only in protests, but also in male dominated workspaces like the media, or the work that they do through human rights organisations is slowly changing society towards

becoming more inclusive for women. Because this generation is so acutely aware of the fact that their public space is much different from when their parents were their age, they feel an urgent need to fight for what they feel has been lost because of the tightening of rules and regulations through the AFSPA. Based on my respondents interviews I concluded that specifically women living under the AFSPA have to constantly negotiate the presence of army men in combination with patriarchal structure from their own society. This double bind of oppression is a recurring subject in every part my research. My respondent's interviews emphasize how this oppression seeps through the most integrate details of their lives. Oppression shaped by the effects of the AFSPA keeps women inside the house more often than men and limits their future in other ways than men experience its effects. For example, my respondents talked about their families policing their movements more than their male family members and in some cases respondents told me that studying outside Kashmir was not an option for them, because it means there is not direct family supervision.

Coming back to the main question I set out to answer in this thesis: How has the securitization of Kashmir – through the use of the AFSPA – mobilized women to use public space as a tool of resistance in Srinagar, since its implementation in 1990? Apart from the more well-known effects of the AFSPA; the enforced disappearances, the tortures and sexual assaults that are happening with impunity, interviews with my respondents shows that the more intricate effects of the AFSPA push women to stand up for their rights as women in this conflict. At the introduction chapter of this thesis I shaped my critical exploration of securitization theory based on Lene Hansen's concepts of 'Security of silence' and 'Subsuming security'. Based on my research I find that viewing women as eternal victims of conflict or incidental participants silences them from voicing experiences that do not fit in this narrative. This generation has started to voice insecurities they experience over a plethora of other subjects, through news articles, social media posts or art like poetry and paintings. The interlinkage of women's identities as female, Muslim and below 35-years-old, gives them more strength rather than insecurity. Because it is this generation of women that is subverting public space by using it to interact with women like them and men.

However, Lene Hansen's critique still holds up in the sense that not every woman can speak out about the problems she faces. It is easier for English speaking women living in Kashmir to speak about their lives than women living in the more traditional rural parts of the region. Women as survivors and victims of sexual abuse by the military, for example, were not accessible to me as a researcher because the stigma

they face from society. Evidently my respondents are all in a slightly more privileged position of being able to raise their voices through their work or their protesting.

Sadly, I think my research fell in the trap of wanting to do too much and not having enough time for that. I tried to take a broad look at a very complex problem. In parts of this thesis the research would have benefited from more focus. If I would go back to Kashmir I would take a single detail concerning the lives of women from this post-1990 generation from this thesis and focus on it even more. In the months that I have been writing this thesis some new works have come up that do focus on this generation, although in the future I would love to see more work on women as agents of change in Kashmir. I truly believe that this generation is special. Based on my respondents interviews I think that more than ever before women mobilize for their own rights, using public space as an inclusive space in which women not only walk next to men during protest but also have feel free to make their own claims. When at times this space is denied, because it is dominated by male voices, this generation is aware that they can change Kashmir society from within because they can. There are more tools, especially for young urban women there are more tools than ever available to them to make themselves heard. Whether it is via social media, student led protests or just by talking over a hot cup of Kahwah in one of the many new café's that have popped up, my respondents are changing the face of resistance now through their daily lives of resistance.

Figure 4. Table of my respondents anonymised.

No.	Respondents fake name	Birth year	Focus group	Location	Date
1	Faiqa	1995	Student	Kashmir University, Hazratbal	24-03-2018
2	Aaqilah	1997	Student	Kashmir University, Hazratbal	02-04-2018
3	Fahima	1997	Student	Kashmir University, Hazratbal	02-04-2018
4	Maisarah	1997	Student	Kashmir University, Hazratbal	02-04-2018
5	Parmita	1993	Student	Kashmir University, Hazratbal	20-03-2018
6	Tahseenah		Student	Phone conversation	10-04-2018
7	Aamira	1995	Student	Phone conversation	12-04-2018
8	Leila	1997	Student	Kashmir University, Hazratbal	04-04-2018
9	Bahar	1995	Student	ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge	18-04-2018
10	Jahida	1993	Student	ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge	18-04-2018
11	Tibah	1991	Student	Telephone conversation	22-04-2018

12	Busrah	1995	Student	Telephone conversation	22-04-2018
13	Wardah	1992	Student	Telephone conversation	15-03-2018
14	Misha	1995	Student	Kashmir University	12-03-2018
15	Insaf	1992	Media	Ahdoos Restaurant, Residency road	18-04-2018
16	Jihan	1991	Media	Ahdoos Restaurant, Residency road	18-04-2018
17	Qailah	1993	Media	Ahdoos Restaurant	18-04-2018
18	Dunya	1995	Media	Zero Bridge, Jhelum river	16-04-2018
19	Aaliyah	1993	Media	Mahatta Café, Residency Road	25-03-2018
20	Zahirah	1986	Media	ZeroBridge Fine Dine, Zero Bridge	17-03-2018
21	Sabriyah	1993	Human Rights Organisation	At the office, Secret location	08-03-2018
22	Wareesha	1988	Human Rights Organisation	At the office, Secret location	05-03-2018
23	Gulshan	1990	Human Rights Organisation	At the office, Secret location	07-03-2018
24	Afrah	50-years old	Family	Pratap Park, MA Road	28-04-2018
25	Rima	45-years old	Family	Pratap Park, MA Road	28-04-2018
26	Wardah	38-years old	Family	At her home in Srinagar	19-04-2018

27	Zahirah	65-years old	Family	At her home in Srinagar	19-04-2018
28	Jameela	35 years old	Family	At their home in Srinagar	09-04-2018
29	Tabassum	Age unknown	Wife of hanged militant Afzal Guru	At her house, secret location.	
30	Afshan	1994	Former stone pelter/ football coach	Bagel Shop, Bandra Mumbai	27-04-2018
31	Asiya Andrabi	56-years old	Leader of the Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of the nation)	Her house, secret address	2018

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