YOUTH AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA

A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF CONFLICT EXPERIENCES FROM THE KASHMIR VALLEY

Sramana Majumdar

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This book offers a sociocultural and interdisciplinary understanding of the impact of political violence on youth behaviour. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in the Kashmir valley and reports from conflict areas across the globe, the volume brings into focus the ways in which violence affects social and psychological dynamics within the individual and the community. It develops a social psychological approach to the study of youth and violent conflict in South Asia, and offers new insights into the intricacies within the discourse. Focussing on the emotions and behaviour of people in large-scale conflict, it expands the discourse on the psychological dimensions of hope, aggression, emotion regulation and extremist mindset to inform policy and intervention for peacebuilding.

Moving beyond Western psychiatric models, this book proposes a more culturally and historically rooted analysis that focusses on collective experiences of violence to de-colonise psychological science and expand the understanding of youth's experiences with political violence. The volume will be of great interest to scholars and researchers of politics, psychology, peace and conflict studies, sociology and social anthropology.

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A Social Psychological Account of Conflict Experiences from the Kashmir Valley

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KASHMIR

I've heard your praises, they say you are perfect,
oh so perfect at a glance,
the chaos dawns ever so slowly, the imperfections stare back at me,
Your timidness is a veil
you are untamed, erratic sudden and slow,
in your coldness and warm smiles
mountains and absurd tea,
carpets and timber, like careless breaths in a deep slumber
at once magic, at once ordinary
so much to redeem, so much to know.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is based on my journey as a researcher over the last eight years. During this time, I have had the opportunity to interact with and learn from many colleagues and friends, whose insights have shaped my own understanding. I thank you all.

Someone once asked me how I developed an interest in violence and conflict, and how it affects people. What was my motivation behind the desire to know about Kashmir, which, to many, seemed unnecessarily challenging? This got me thinking, and I realized that well before my professional and academic interests developed, it was a sense of justice, unfairness and suffering, and questions around freedom that had shaped my inclination. For this, and for always supporting me in my unconventional choices, I thank my parents. I acknowledge the love and support of two individuals who would have been very happy today—Aunty and Jeja thank you for your encouragement. I thank my friends—our endless conversations have inspired me to think more and discover more. A special thank you to my partner through this journey, Saurabh. I dedicate this work to Ma, Babai and S.

I would like to thank my friends in Kashmir, who were responsible for informing and educating me: Suriya Hamid (Suriyadi), Baba and family, who adopted me during my time in Kashmir and fed me the best lentils with spinach; Asma Nabi Malik (my dear and very wise friend, whose words I refer to throughout the book) and family; Muzaffar Hussain Kawa and all the students at Kashmir University who participated in my research and shared their experiences; and Md. Altaf Paul, Mudassir Hassan, Shaheena Parveen and other friends from Jamia who have knowingly or unknowingly contributed to this work.

Over this period I have been extremely lucky to be mentored by a few wonderful senior academics. Prof Waheeda Khan, my PhD supervisor and a constant support through that time, remains extremely close to the development of this work. I shall always be grateful for her encouragement and acknowledgement. Dr Johanna Vollhardt and the staff, faculty and research scholars at Clark University provided me with an enriching experience as

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My interest in studying large-scale violence began sometime during my postgraduate studies. While the seeds of interest may have been laid farther back, the realization of this interest formed through a series of thought-provoking conversations with a friend during this period. Locked in a very un-exciting hostel situation, we had discussions on several political and social realities, one of which was the use of, reaction to and endorsement of violence as a means in conflict and social change. My friend had grown up in the North Cacchar Hills of Assam and had witnessed several violent clashes between ethnic tribes of the region. He spoke of the conversations he had with some of the leaders there and how that reflected on the meaning of violence in these long-running conflicts. This narrative of identity, land, ethnicity, occupation and violence directly challenged my own understanding of all of these themes. It forced me to reflect on my own privilege, not just in terms of the distanced reality of security, access and opportunity that I had grown up in but also how violent socio-political environments could reshape cognitive meaning making and behavioural choices. For the first time I started to question whether context, place, history and culture influenced how we made sense of violence, and the circumstances that would allow individuals to accept, endorse and perpetuate violence in the name of identity. To further these questions, and with a new interest around themes of peace and conflict, I began looking for opportunities to work with organizations, think tanks and centres of research in India that were actively engaging with these questions. I may not have identified myself as a political or social psychologist at that point, but understanding the self had become deeply entrenched in understanding the context. At every step, my own understanding of who I am, and therefore what I feel and how I behave, became more and more mirrored by where I grew up, which language I spoke, and the gender that I belonged to.

Organizations focussing on these topics in research or intervention were limited. I shortlisted a few from the available information and applied to them. The response from one of these agencies was of much significance as it would go on to shape my future inclinations and the interests that have

guided the tone of this book. The response mentioned how my background in psychology was not a suitable match or requirement for this organization, whose main interest was in examining and analyzing patterns in contemporary conflict situations, and engaging with questions on peace and conflict. At that point I was disappointed—but in the following days I became extremely curious about this problem. Conflict, war, violence and peace are all social phenomenon that involve people, groups, communities, tribes, armies and nations. Hence, to comment on any of these, do we not automatically have to understand why people fight, what motivates them, what escalates these motivations into the use of violence and what the possible routes to resolution and reconciliation could be? Following up on this, I checked the board of experts across all the existing think tanks and research organizations that I had come across and noted that most of them were economists, sociologists, historians, political scientists and literature scholars. The presence of psychologists of any specialization, or the use of any psychological concepts or ideas from other contexts, was prominently missing. Similarly, the application of psychology to political issues and deep investigations into social realities through a psychological lens was largely absent from psychology curriculums. Social psychology, which was a popular undergraduate course, introduced the student to findings from past experiments on conformity, obedience, group dynamics and so on, but in no way did it urge students to think about social and cultural realities around them and examine the roots of prejudice and violence. Consequently, psychologists were not interested in working on these themes post academia, with little or no representation in organizations and research centres.

This decontextualized approach has been a particular methodological issue in psychology, and there is conscious movement within several sections of psychologists towards a more culturally and socially informed psychological science, which I will be discussing more throughout the book. This has specific repercussions for post-colonial societies like India, wherein the development of the discipline has suffered from this distant pedagogical inclination. The rapidly transforming socio-economic and cultural milieu in these regions with a distinct historical, traditional and political climate pose serious challenges to theoretical and conceptual lenses developed in the West. Several scholars, like Dalal and Nandy, have pointed out how the myopic focus of mainstream psychology in India has continued to work from a modernistic-empirical framework driven by objectivity and individualism. Thus, while more individual-focussed areas within the discipline, like clinical work and counselling, have seen considerable growth, social psychology and its many applications across governmental and non-governmental forums has remained negligible. Analysis of group behaviour gained popularity within organizational psychology as a response to the needs of the growing corporate private sector, which

has seen a drastic increase in the last two decades. The application of psychology to clinical and non-clinical life course settings has developed considerably. Even though mental health continues to be stigmatized and has several constraints in general, there is growing attention to the needs of youth and children, especially related to education and health. Therapeutic and clinical assistance and support is widely available in urban areas, not only in large hospitals but also in smaller specialized clinics. Research and theory within psychology has simultaneously emerged with a substantial body of scholarship on psychosocial therapeutic work in Indian settings.

Psychological work addressing social concerns did find a voice in the writing of several scholars, like Pareek, Sinha, Tripathi, Dalal, Mishra and others, who examined social realities like poverty, social change and community development, and conducted culturally informed studies on cognition and emotions (Dalal, 2010; Misra & Paranjape, 2012). Prof Ashis Nandy is one of the few Indian psychologists to have done extensive work on collective violence, specifically the partition of India, and related ideas around nationhood and selfhood. He believes that the intersection between politics and psychology has always been there, but what is lacking is the influence of work from psychology informing other disciplinary formulations and sustained interdisciplinary work. A significant reason for this is the lack of interest in the 'Political' among psychologists (A. Nandy, personal communication, July 2, 2018). Given the scope of psychological concepts at hand, its application to social and political themes has not evolved comparatively. It is therefore not surprising that through my own studies I read and knew more about the Holocaust than the partition of India and Pakistan. Once I engaged more deeply with events of collective violence and looked towards our own history, I realized that this event, responsible for large-scale violence and related inter-generational trauma (both of the kind that is in memory and the kind that is existential and continues to dictate life in the sub-continent) has rarely become a subject of study and analysis within the social sciences at large (work has predominantly happened in literature and history), and psychology specifically.

The South Asian region, with its history of colonialism; ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity; and years of contested post-colonial politics, has many intersections of violence today. India and the entire region of the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh) have been colonial products of division and artificial territorialization, resulting in the othering of religious communities, marked socio-economic and regional differences, and ethnic sub-nationalism. This, along with more traditional forms of discrimination on the basis of gender and caste, form the basic rubric of social life in this region. Communities have suffered from persistent and intense periods of violence, both direct and structural. These become essential points to examine if we attempt to understand the

Indian subject today, the historical/political and social representation of the 'Indian'. The 'Indian subject'—as an individual and a collective—is an amalgamation of all of these historical realities along with contemporary forces of social change like globalization and the growth and spread of the Internet.

Social media is widely used by a large section of the population at present, wherein news, social and political views, and opinions are shared constantly. The exposure to global information and the access to technological mediums has led to an increase in general awareness among youth with regard to questions and discourses around identity, equality, gender, social prejudice and related violence. I have personally observed this phenomenon among graduate and undergraduate students at the universities with which I have been associated. Students not only have access to data and information, but they are raising important and relevant questions when it comes to the domain of social sciences. While teaching papers on childhood, abnormality, disability and so on, it has become increasingly difficult (and desirably so) to keep a narrow lens that focusses only on individualistic psychological assumptions without addressing cultural and cross-sectional dimensions of class, location, caste, religion and gender. Therefore, it has become imperative to question how psychological teaching and learning can move forward without taking into account these basic pedagogical issues that are being pointed out not only exogenously (by researchers all around the world) but also endogenously by students and scholars within each institution and course. This has brought forth the need to address culturally and contextually relevant issues that form the social milieu of present India with the hope of addressing questions on identity and violence, and thinking about ways forward.

Erich Fromm, who championed the development of a lens of understanding that extends theoretical-psychological concepts to social happenings, said,

> "Pointing out the significance of psychological considerations in relation to the present scene does not imply, in my opinion, an overestimation of psychology. The basic entity of the social process is the individual, his desires and fears, his passions and reason, his propensities for good and for evil. To understand the dynamics of the social process we must understand the dynamics of the psychological processes operating within the individual, just as to understand the individual we must see him in the context of the culture which moulds him".
>
> (Fromm, 1942, para 2)

This book is an attempt to present one such account of analysis of ongoing large-scale conflict and how it affects people living in the region. Social

psychological themes range from overt social realities like war to more covert and structural issues, like discrimination, exploitation, subversion and marginalization of communities and groups, and how histories of disadvantage shape present political agenda and future motivations. Social psychologists globally are looking at electoral and voting behaviour, predictions of populist and extremist governments, radicalization and terrorism, peacebuilding and post-war reconciliation and many similar areas of research. Unfortunately, the need of the present world when it comes to the understanding of violence is at its peak, and a renewed and vigorous investment is required to address these pressing concerns. This presentation of the social psychological analysis of violence among youth in the Kashmir Valley attempts not only to put forward questions for future engaged research in India but also to add to the global move towards research on these themes from diversified contexts. It is not surprising that even though the Kashmir conflict has been a highly politicized issue for over three decades, very few outside of India and the neighbouring region know about it. Therefore, the hope here is threefold: first to encourage young scholars to engage with the rich concepts and applications within social psychology, second to emphasize a more inclusive and interdisciplinary approach towards issues on conflict by specially highlighting the role of psychology in this discourse, and third to examine existing theories and categories in a context that has been largely neglected and thereby produce contextually specific questions that may drive future research within social psychology. Beyond the academic intentions of the research, it is also an integral attempt to present the narratives of a community living in an endless state of violence and to emphasize the immediate and drastic need for informed policy and intervention. Informed policy needs to include the community's needs, grievances, perceptions, fears and inclinations, and work towards how individual and collective psychological suffering can be addressed.

1

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF CONFLICT

Conflict is a ubiquitous social phenomenon that manifests in various forms, ranging from the interpersonal to conflict within families and small social groups, like kin and neighbourhood, to larger occurrences, like war and regional insurgency. The essential and omnipresent nature of conflict is well described by Berkovitch, Kremenyuk, and Zartman (2009, p. 3), who view it as "an inherent feature of human existence, even useful on certain occasions". According to the authors, conflict is located at the "very heart of all human societies", making it a widely explored topic that has intrigued thinkers for generations.

When we talk about conflict, it usually refers to opposing stands represented by two or more people or groups. However, conflict may sometimes be between opposing ideas or thoughts of the same person—for instance in a situation that involves taking a stand about an issue or making a decision between conflicting choices. The focus of this book and the research study it describes is on 'social conflict' and more specifically intergroup conflict. Social conflict is the confrontation of social powers (Rummel, 1976), implying the involvement of more than one person and thus distinct from conflict with or within one self. Tajfel and Turner (1979) differentiate between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour, where interpersonal behaviour is determined by the personal relationships between two individuals and not at all influenced by the social group to which they belong to, whereas intergroup behaviour is completely shaped by group norms and not dependent on the inter-individual relationships. The authors, however, emphasize that in reality social behaviour cannot be segregated along these strict and pure lines as most individuals interact closely with their social environments, merging the lines between the two categories. Rummel (1976) categorizes the manifestations of social conflicts into:

i Conflict of congruent interests—where both parties want the same thing: for instance when two nations lay claim to a particular piece of land;

ii   Conflict of inverse interests—where one party wants the thing that the other party does not: for instance when one group wants a certain law to be passed which is not desired by another group, who may view the legislation as detrimental to their interests. For example, the movement for civil rights in America; and

iii Conflict of incompatible interests—where one party wants something that is incompatible with the demands of the other party: for instance when minorities in a state have different interests and might align themselves with ideologies that are incompatible with those of the majority.

Social relationships involve conflict at all levels. However, that does not imply that every form of conflict is destructive or incompatible. Forgas, Kruglanski, and Williams (2011) point out that human communities show a great capacity for coordination, empathy and altruism, which ensures that most people live their entire lives without experiencing any form of serious social conflict or violence. There are also instances when competition and conflict is constructive, and many such conflicting situations reach amicable resolutions in our daily lives (Deutsch, 2006a). It is only when peaceful resolution is not possible, and the conflict escalates into a situation where "the parties work to control each other in adversarial and antagonistic ways" that a condition of "destructive conflict" might appear (Fisher, 2006). The author points out that in a social context, factors that lead to intergroup conflict are usually not "misrepresentations or misunderstandings" but involve real situations of "differences in social power, access to resources, important life values or other significant incompatibilities" (p. 177). Yet, if many such hierarchies of power and need discrepancies exist, then why is it that all social interactions do not end up in destructive conflict? The answer is in the fact that any situation ultimately depends on the way the individual or group perceives it and their actions and reactions based on those perceptions. It is only when an existing condition of social inequality manifests through situational and subjective processes that incompatibles interests or needs will become prominent and escalate into a non-compromising situation of conflict. Thus, social conflicts involve the interplay of historical power differentials, privilege, perceived threat and accompanying situational factors that enhance the need for change or aggressive action.

Fisher (1990, 2006) classifies intergroup conflict based on source and location. The first typology includes conflicts that are value based (differences in ideologies and value systems), economic (differences in allocation and access to resources), needs based (where certain groups are unable to realize or achieve the gratification of basic needs, like security, identity and so on) and power conflicts (where groups attempt to assert power over others). Based on location, intergroup conflicts can be organizational (between different ranks: for instance manager and subordinates), communal (conflicts based on ethnicity, race or religion), societal (involving antagonistic relations between

social classes, political elites or majority-minority) and international (between nations). Though the above classifications help in locating and placing the sources and dynamics of various intergroup conflicts that plague our world, in reality, as mentioned before, intergroup conflict is multilevel and, at a given point in time, exhibits characteristics of more than one of these categories.

More importantly, a significant number of intergroup and international conflicts that exist today are of an intractable nature, including the context that forms the locale for this book—The Kashmir Valley. This form of intergroup conflict, termed 'protracted social conflict' (Azar, 1983), involves a multiplicity of factors and conditions that create a web of 'irresolvable issues'. Fisher (1990) describes such protracted conflicts as involving socio psychological aspects, like the non-gratification of needs; perceived threats to identity and security; and economic and material factors of militarization, poverty, unemployment and lack of political resources. Azar (1990) extends the discussion around the underlying causes of protracted social conflicts to include historical and political antecedents that further problematize such conflicts. Thus 'colonial legacy' and 'multi-communalism' are historical aspects of certain societies that make them more susceptible to conditions resulting in protracted conflict. Daniel Bar-Tal, an eminent social psychologist who has worked extensively on intractable conflicts, adds further to the aspects of violence, long duration, investment (both material and psychological) and irresolvable character of such conflicts to highlight that intractable large-scale conflicts tend to become a zero-sum game for the parties involved while also becoming essentially a central and continuous reality for these groups (Reykowski, 2015). The dispute over the land of Kashmir and the related violence that has lasted for more than three decades represents a similar situation of protracted social conflict, where historical and political disagreements have combined with social and psychological issues of identity, security, rights assertion and autonomy. The conflict is viewed as seemingly irreconcilable with repeated and periodic breakdowns into violence. The Kashmir conflict will be discussed in detail later on; now we return to the discussion on the nature of intergroup conflicts and list below some of the major theoretical perspectives that have guided the study and understanding of conflict.

Brief overview of relevant theories on conflict

In the last three centuries, conflict has been a fundamental area of study among many important schools of thought. Some of the major theories that have influenced conflict research are:

I   Marxism—The Marxian approach, developed by Marx and Engels in the late 19th century, views social conflict as a natural outcome of social inequalities that exist in society and necessitate the rise of the oppressed in the form of social change or revolution. While

economic power differentials lie at the heart of any Marxian explanation, the theory extends to all sectors of society and includes social oppression as well. Critics question the absolute dependence on a class system that this theory adheres to and the belief that inequality and conflict can be eliminated if the institution of class is removed. In actuality, no society has been free of class, and the imagination of a classless society is considered utopic by many. Moreover, social differences and other mediums of dominance, like race, gender, community and religion, are sometimes more immediately associated with the emergence of conflict. However, a Marxian perspective can never be completely ignored because all forms of social differences are ultimately representative of class or lead to the occupation of specific class identities, thus involving an aspect of unequal access to resources common to most contexts of violent conflict. Conflicts may emerge from other differences between people, but most ultimately result in further polarization of classes and disproportionate suffering for those who are economically less privileged.

II Structural-Functionalism—A structural functional approach that grew in America over the first half of the 20th century through the works of scholars like Parsons and Durkheim (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993), views society as a self-regulating, functional organism that has the capacity to change and adjust to inputs from the external environment. The social system remains in a homeostatic state or state of equilibrium and order that is only disturbed when a radical change in the environment temporarily puts the system in disorder. Thus, social change is seen as inherent in the social system and is usually gradual and resolvable. This is seen as a state of conflict, which is, however, only temporary under this approach until the society "self regulates back to equilibrium or some sort of normative structure that individuals adhere to" (Conteh-Morgan, 2004, p. 52). This theoretical approach, though influential in social sciences, has been strongly criticized over time as elitist and partisan in explanation. The concept of social order has been widely questioned because in reality, societies are marked by inequalities of many forms and may only be functional for the elite or powerful. Moreover, protracted conflicts and similar cases of prolonged intense conflicts directly challenge the concept of self-regulation that is promulgated by this theory as they often last for several decades and show no signs of resolution that will ensure lasting peace and order.

III Constructivism—Constructivist philosophy has impacted social knowledge and understanding in path-breaking ways as an opposition to positivism and modernism. In contrast to functionalism and developed through the work of scholars like Vygotsky, Piaget and others in the same era, this theory places the actor or agent in a

primary place and propounds that any social situation or phenomenon depends on how the actor makes sense of it. The process of meaning making comprises norms, values and ideologies that are socially constructed and passed on through generations. Norms and values are subjected to change, and conflict may happen when such changes happen or when the social reality of one group clashes with the perceptions of another. The occurrence of conflict, like any other social phenomenon, will be determined by how individuals perceive, understand, relate to and make sense of their social realities. The most remarkable contribution of this school of thought to the understanding of conflict is the emphasis on how socially constructed meaning systems determine individual belief and action. The fact that group norms define how individuals perceive their environment has historically been a feature of ideology propagation in violent conflicts, with a particular socially constructed narrative marginalizing other versions of reality.

IV Feminism—Feminist theories that gained momentum after the movement for suffrage in America between 1910 and 1930 view society as a platform of patriarchal dominance and hegemonic power that can be understood more accurately only through the analysis of the needs and experiences of marginalized populations like women and other less powerful groups. It is primarily a critical theory that questions the main tenets of major theoretical perspectives by bringing to the forefront the realities of social inequality and the voices of subaltern actors. While the focus of analysis may be different for feminists, their perspective is of much significance considering that in modern conflicts civilians, and specifically women, are disproportionately affected. More contemporary feminist thinkers have focussed on armed military conflicts that are viewed as masculine spaces that propagate violence and make peaceful resolution difficult. Moreover, there is a growing recognition that conflict transformation and reconciliation needs to take into account the narratives of all parties involved in the conflict, including the marginalized and less visible actors (Majumdar & Khan, 2014).

Other than the overarching schools of thought described above, there are a few theoretical views that have been more concretely put to the analysis on group-based conflict. These are:

V Mass Society Theory—Kornhauser (1959) presented an interesting analysis of "Mass" society and the emergence of mass movements in the *Politics of Mass Society*. His analysis is heavily influenced by Western ideas of democracy and nationalism, and was developed based on observations of Nazi Germany and the rise of Communism in Russia. According to this view, mass movements attract alienated or atomized individuals, like marginalized businessmen,

freelancing intellectuals, unattached workers who have little or no ties with the existing institutions of political power. "People cannot be mobilized against the established order until they first have been divorced from prevailing codes and relations" (Kornhauser, 1959, p. 123). The author believed that when "discontinuities in the social process" (p. 128) are followed by a sense of dissatisfaction among the masses, democratic or populist regimes can mobilize people to overthrow the existing system through a mass movement which is sometimes violent and rapid. The breakdown of *class ties* and the formation of *mass ties* which is seen in large-scale political and social movements around the world, in which participants from various socio-economic classes become involved, is an important aspect of this analysis. Political and economic disenfranchisement, and the rise of populist governments is a social occurrence that can be observed across the globe today. While violent extremist revolutions often happen on the backdrop of totalitarian regimes, where many individuals may feel alienated, protracted social conflicts in recent times have involved issues pertaining to identity, race, ethnicity, religion, territory and historical oppression of social institutions demanding an exit from a purely "class based" framework to more integrated and multidimensional theories. Additionally, there is significant evidence to counter the claim that the most socially isolated masses are drawn into conflict with repeated observations that pre-existing ties along multiple identity ascriptions determine participation in collective action of any kind (Buechler, 2013).

VI   Collective Behaviour Theory (1962, 2011) is an extremely detailed and informative analysis of the constituents and causes of collective behaviour. The particular achievement here is the amalgamation of observations and inferences derived from a range of collective behaviours that have informed the structure of this theory. Smelser starts off with the components of social action (values, norms, organizational motivation and environmental resources or facilities) and moves on to describe elements of societal strain and conduciveness that are essential for any collective behaviour to happen. The pattern of combination between components and other elements of generalized beliefs, social conduciveness and existing strain in the system determines the nature and extent of collective behaviour. The resulting behaviour can range from panic, craze and hostile outbursts, based on the reconstitution of more short-term situational factors caused by hysteria, wish fulfilment and scapegoating, to more long-term reconstitution of existing norms and values. Most modern social conflicts seem to fall within the ambit of value oriented collective action where values, according to Smelser, may be religious, cultural, political or economic. Thus, when some form of

social strain is experienced by populations, based on their religious or cultural belief, for instance, and alternate mediums of grievance expression are suppressed, including hostile outbursts, the spread of generalized beliefs based on those values results in social movements. An added observation here is that most cases of long-standing intense and violent conflicts may progress from an episode of hostile outburst to a value oriented collective movement, or vice versa, or have alternate phases of both.

VII Rational Choice Theory—A much debated and discussed theory that was popularized with the publication of Olson's "The Logic of Collective Action" in 1965 views individual participation in collective behaviours like protests and violent conflicts as driven by rationality rather than emotions. Here, individuals do a careful, albeit subconscious, cost-benefit analysis of participating in any collective activity that is completely rational and propelled by motives of individual gratification. The motives that influence choice can be economic (wealth), socio-political (status, power) or even psychological (self-worth). Sometimes the avoidance of negative consequences, for instance the feeling of devaluation of self or regret, can also motivate participation, irrespective of whether the participant views his presence as decisive or not (Conteh-Morgan, 2004). There has been a body of work that specifically talks about the role of rational choice, based on the want and need of resources like money and power, in international conflicts, like the genocide in Rwanda (Jean, 2006). Considering the substantial loss of life, property and social utilities that is common in situations of intense conflict, the role of material and psychological resources as motivating factors in participation seems valid. Moreover research has time and again found a definite association between self-esteem and participation in violent activities (Scheff, Retzinger, & Ryan, 1989). However examples of participation in collective action like protests and marches as well as other philanthropic and altruistic behaviours where individuals invest and support issues that do not benefit them in any way can be seen as directly challenging the doctrine of rational choice. (Conteh-Morgan, 2004). These examples highlight the role of other cognitive (thoughts, perceptions and decisions) and affective (emotions) capacities that may be significant in contexts of collective behaviour and conflict.

VIII Relative Deprivation Theory (1960s)—Like Rational Choice, the theory of relative deprivation also builds on the agency of the actors in a situation but from the standpoint of expectations, wants and perceived injustice. According to this school of thought, conflicts arise when groups feel that they have been deprived of something that they rightfully own, deserve or expect. It is *relative* because

the perception of the lack of possession is always relative—to a point in time, another group or an imagined reality. Gurr in his book *Why Men Rebel* (1970, p. 13) defines relative deprivation as "a discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities". In all three types of relative deprivation—*decremental, aspirational and progressive*—there is a mismatch between wants and capabilities, either in terms of past and present (what we had and do not have any more but perceive ourselves as deserving of), at the same point in time (what we think we deserve or aspire to have but do not own) or in inverse relation (when we aspire to have more of and have less of). Gurr (1970) believed that most revolutions happen when a society experiences some amount of development and progress, and is then hit with sharp stagnancy or a fall. Additional elements of whether a society is accepting of violence and the normative structure supporting or challenging it, as well as channels of communication that are essential in the spread of information, propaganda, ideology, perceptions, material and ammunitions during a conflict, determine the chances of violence to occur. Interestingly, Gurr had emphasized that the sense of deprivation is perceived (closely associated with more contemporary ideas of perceived injustice) rather than factual, and the transition from deprivation induced frustration to mass mobilization and collective violence requires some form of politicization. The role of political ideology and political elites in contemporary mass movements, have become increasingly significant in the way that group-based differences are emphasized and reiterated through active campaigning and propaganda. Relative deprivation has been an influential school of thought that highlights the role of perception of differences and raised the question of who we compare ourselves to, when, under what circumstances and why. Themes of perceived injustice, threat, frustration, anger and humiliation that can arise out of feelings of deprivation have over the years become significant social psychological determinants of violent conflict.

IX   Social Identity Theory—A celebrated school of thought that has markedly influenced the socio psychological study of intergroup conflict and our general understanding of intergroup behaviour is the social identity theory, pioneered by Henry Tajfel and his team in the 1970s. Here, group categorization, that is, the segregation of individuals into two or more groups, can create biased attitudes, wherein one is more likely to exhibit positive attitudes towards the in-group. Social identity—the part of an individual's identity that is derived from his or her group membership—is closely associated with aspects of self-esteem and self-concept. This identity is maintained and kept salient by perceiving in-group traits as positive and by differentiating these traits from those of the out-group (Brewer,

2001; Fisher, 1990). Authors like Brewer (2001) have emphasized that it is the need to maintain 'in-group distinctiveness' that drives individuals to engage in differential treatment of the in-group and out-group, and when there is any level of perceived competition or threat from the out-group, this need may motivate extreme measures to maintain in-group identity, resulting in violence. It has been widely seen that out-group harm or extreme prejudice does not occur as easily as in-group favouritism, implying that there must be other influences beyond social identification: for instance the role of authority, cultural models of behaviour, etc. that are operative in contexts of violent conflict. Nonetheless, the role of social identity in the meaning making and social functioning of individuals is unquestionable. Hornsey (2008) highlights the contributions of this theory to the study of stereotypes (how they can shift when the standard of comparison is changed); crowd and rioting behaviour (as normative behavioural standards of a collective social identity); and other social behaviours, like conformity, power and resistance.

Social psychological theorization on intergroup relations and conflict has included concepts around identity and categorization (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010), stereotyping and prejudice (Allport, 1954; Dixon & Levine, 2012), justice, grievance and protest (Tyler & Smith, 1998), group based dominance and system justifying beliefs (Sidanius, Pratto, Van laar, & Levin, 2004) as well as more contemporary ideas, like the dynamical systems theory, where interconnected parts and participants in protracted conflict are assumed to change and evolve over time based on how each of those parts functions and how it affects the others (Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak, & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010). This book draws from many of the core concepts and important findings in social psychological literature on intergroup conflict. Before going further, the following section will discuss the development and evolution of social psychological thought on intergroup conflict and create a background for the research study discussed thereinafter.

Social psychology and the study of conflict

Historically, perspectives on the causes and consequences of human conflict have been diverse within the field of psychology. A major theme that has shaped the development of social psychological work on conflict and violence is the nature-nurture debate, that is, whether violence is inherent or an intrinsic human tendency, or a result of one's interaction with their environment. Forgas et al. (2011) give an interesting account of early psychologists like Freud, James and McDougall, who emphasized the instinctual or inherent nature of conflict and aggression. Within this school of thought theorists, there were some extremists, like Lorenz, who believed

that aggressive instincts were innate in humans and were not dependent on situational stimuli. The role of situational inhibitors or enhancers in the social process that leads to conflict and aggressive behaviour developed as the other broad theoretical framework directed at the analysis of social conflict. It is interesting to note that both Freud and McDougall mentioned the role of external element or environment in their own theories. The aspect of thwarting of a goal or instinct for pleasure by an external condition became a popular idea that was incorporated within the 'frustration induced aggression' framework. With time, a more inclusive approach was developed by psychologists like Berkowitz (1989) which combined the early notions of instinctual aggression and human capacity for conflict with later theories of social learning.

The Second World War and the Holocaust became significant historical events that would heavily influence the course of social psychological enquiry. Unsurprisingly, psychologists, like other social scientists, were motivated to understand the causes for extreme group-based hatred and violence. Initial explanations of violent behaviour concentrated on individual personality traits that predisposed a person to become susceptible to authoritarian obedience. Adorno and colleagues in 1950 proposed a psychodynamic approach to the explanation of blind obedience to extreme orders. According to them, childhood experiences of punishment and abuse resulted in the repression of anger generated towards parents (authority figures) and its expression as obedience towards adult authority figures. An *authoritarian personality* would be dogmatic, rule-bound, obedient, prejudiced and therefore accepting of or conforming to war propaganda. In the next decade, Stanley Milgram conducted his famous obedience experiments, which revealed how regular people could go to a severe extent of inflicting violence when the orders were assumed to have come from legitimate authority figures. However, with the development and popularization of findings that highlighted contextual and situational influences on behaviour (like group-based identity, perceived injustice and relative deprivation) the focus of analysis expanded beyond an individualistic lens. The controversial Stanford Prison Experiment, conducted by social psychologist Philip Zimbardo and his team, showed how group identity and role playing could induce violent behaviour amongst unsuspecting individuals.

Gradually, as group conflict began to be viewed as a separate phenomenon from individual conflict, theories specific to intergroup conflict and social behaviour developed. Scholars attempted to analyze this complex phenomenon from evolutionary, biological and cultural perspectives. While some claimed that conflict is a carry-on from preliminary stages of evolution, as is seen in most species in the animal world, others, like Koestler (1972), proposed that the human tendency to be violent towards their own species is an evolutionary flaw (Forgas et al., 2011). On the other hand, research on group behaviour and intergroup relations also started capturing the scene,

with multiple explorations into the concepts of social identity, social categorization, collective behaviour, ethnocentrism and stereotyping. Social psychological work on conflict exponentially expanded in the following decades to address complex and intricate aspects of competitive, conflicting and violent behaviour, and in the process borrowed from, and contributed to, a larger social scientific explanation of peace and conflict. Explorations into groups-based violence became more open to multidisciplinary ideas, drawing from social, anthropological, cultural, economic and political references. For instance Deutsch (2006b) talks about the influence of game theory on the understanding of conflict and cooperation wherein mathematical advancements in the study of reward in cooperation led to gaming experiments designed to examine group dynamics.

Thus, a large body of work has been dedicated to the understanding of conflict, and with time the tools and method for the same have become more flexible, critical and inclusive. Fisher (1990) lists out three main aspects of a socio psychological understanding of conflict. He argues that because this discipline developed within a phenomenological paradigm, much attention is given to the study of subjective perceptions, cognitions, motivations and affections. Thus how participants perceive and feel about an external situation is directly linked with the second factor of behavioural outcome—the actual behavioural exchange between two parties in conflict. "How parties perceive and interpret each other's actions will be a prime determinant of how they will respond and thereby how the conflict interaction will unfold" (p. 7). Lastly, the author stresses the multilevel analysis that is required for a comprehensive exploration of this topic. Vollhardt and Bilali (2008) characterize social psychological peace research as being (i) normative rather than value neutral, based on the overarching objective to think about ways in which healthy intergroup relations are maintained; (ii) contextual; (iii) multi-level; and (iv) practically oriented.

Like any other aspect of human society and social reality, intergroup conflict is intricate and complicated, needing an approach that combines elements from various theoretical standpoints and places them together in a way that best fits a certain contextual framework. Moreover, any situation of conflict involves reactions and implications at multiple levels—from the intra-personal, interpersonal and intergroup to wider collectives of people. Emphasizing the amalgamative essentiality in theorizing about conflict, Forgas et al. (2011) point out that

> Human conflict is best understood through the careful analysis of the cognitive, affective, and motivational processes of those involved in conflict situations, supplemented by a broadly based understanding of the evolutionary, biological, as well as social and cultural contexts within which social conflict occurs.
>
> (p. 11)

Social psychological research on intergroup conflict has been criticized by many contemporary researchers for having suffered from a particular methodological limitation that has obstructed the generalization and application of these theories. In stark contrast to other disciplines, like anthropology and sociology, where group processes are researched through more ethnographic methods, psychology has continued to emphasize experimental methods and the replication of a real-world setting in a simulated environment or laboratory setting. Alternatively, survey studies have involved college students, usually in a Western setting (where most of this research is conducted) to then develop scales and hypotheses about conflict mechanisms in a completely different part of the world (Vollhardt, 2012; Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008). There is a need to bridge the gap between findings from laboratory settings and real life conflict scenarios by generating knowledge from actual contexts that can better inform theories and policies on conflict (Power, 2011). It is, however, essential to acknowledge that important and path-breaking knowledge on social conflicts and individual behaviour came from such experimental work, like Zimbardo's prison experiment and Milgram's obedience study. Moreover, the very nature of violent conflicts usually dismisses the chances of research being conducted in real time, making a post-analysis, with whatever means available to the psychologist, the only probable option. Nonetheless, the recognition of the inherent issues with a purely experimental method has, over the last few decades, driven social psychologists out to the field, with a large body of work now emerging from interviews and similar qualitative as well as survey data collected from societies caught in violent conflict.

Social psychologists working in natural settings of communities affected by political violence have directed attention to the contextual peculiarities that challenge a universal theorization on human behaviour in intractable conflicts. Elcheroth and Spini (2015) refer to Bar-Tal's work to explain the complex human-context interaction that shapes the understanding of difficult conflicts. The authors question the generalizability of findings that approach the study of societal conflicts from a deductive approach—that is to say that human beings are similar in most contexts, and findings from one context of violence will likely transfer to others. Recent findings from social psychological work highlight unexpected and contrasting evidence to show that huge differences exist between group members of any community that strongly determine how they make sense of violence, react to it and act in these situations. Bar-Tal's own work in the Israel-Palestinian context exemplifies an approach that tries to combine more inductive efforts by greatly focussing on describing and illuminating the intricacies of the conflict. His work on memory and collective ethos in this region and between the groups in conflict creates a certain cultural and contextual foreground on which more deductive theories of social psychological importance are built. The authors go on to further elaborate on the permutation and combination of individual

and collective cognitive functions and societal triggers that shape reactions to a conflict. Thus findings from a particular context do not restrict its generalizability, but it also does not mean that exactly similar reactions can be predicted in all other conflict settings. Therefore, by exploring regional histories, cultural meanings and socio-political realities of any particular context, social psychological attempts to study large-scale conflicts can produce more meaningful theories and applicable findings. This is even more essential when studying post-colonial and developing regions, which have suffered from the dual problematic of lack of indigenous theorization and the unquestioned acceptance of foreign models of social enquiries (Dalal, 2014). A contextual understanding of conflict, violence and the emotional and behavioural responses to the same is contingent to producing and developing de-colonized systems of thought, and thereby diversifying disciplinary boundaries. With these contemporary developments, there is a definite conscious move, at least within certain sections, towards a diversified and cross-cultural examination of universal concepts and themes that inform the social psychological explanations of large-scale intergroup conflict and related violence.

Conflict, violence and violent conflicts

While talking about social conflicts, especially of an intractable nature, the discussion on violence and the use of it in these contexts becomes essential. A social psychological frame of reference recognizes the prime importance of cognitive and affective factors in conflict that are closely associated with the attitude towards and actual use of violence. Most importantly, the experience of violence has lasting effects on individuals and communities, making whole populations psychologically and emotionally distressed, and disrupting paths to recovery and conflict transformation (Hameiri, Porat, Bar-Tal, Bieler, & Halperin, 2014; Pearlman, 2013).

Mack and Snyder (1957) delineated the necessary conditions for conflict to happen. These are: "(i) Existence of two or more opposing parties, (ii) a situation of resource or position scarcity, (iii) behaviour meant to hurt or injure another, and (iv) mutually opposing goals" (Berkovitch et al., 2009). It is the third dimension of coercive behaviour, intended to harm another or achieve one's goals at the cost of another, which covers the aspect of violence. Two things to note here are, first, that whenever we talk about conflict, and a situation of antagonistic interests or goals, the "intention" of hurting another may be widely present. This is because most situations of conflict produce feelings of frustration that can lead to the thought of harming another, avenging one's own or just lashing out in anger. Nonetheless, a conflict may not become violent, or persistently so, as long as the actors do not resort to violence as an overt action or behaviour that is used as a means of expressing a grievance or achieving an end. Thus most violent conflicts are not violent to begin with but possess a multiplicity

of factors that have to come together for the escalation of conflict into its violent form.

Second, though the idea of conflict might seem to possess an inherent element of coercion or violence, largely these two can be separated, and conflict that is non-violent or even constructive may exist. There are conflicts at the inter-communal and international levels that are mitigated by non-violent means, either through persuasion or positive sanctions where one party provides some form of reward or recognition to the other and thus resolves the conflict (Kriesberg, 2007). However, when incompatible interests or goals become omnipotent, and other means of negotiation are unavailable or insufficient, violence may be used by either party or both parties (Berkovitch et al., 2009; Fisher, 1990). Galtung (2002) emphasizes the need to differentiate between conflict and violence, and speaks about conflict as a more natural phenomenon. He believes that even though "conflict may lead to violence", violence is the part of conflict that "has to be prevented". For Galtung (2002, p. 5) violence is "to harm and hurt the body, mind and/or spirit of someone, by verbal and/or physical means (including body language)". He highlights the emotional elements in violence exposure, in which one experiences lack of respect, humiliation and trauma to the body, mind and spirit. The nature of violence and conflicts that do become violent is such that the longer and more complicated the conflict gets, with more issues at stake and more players or parties involved (Kriesberg, 2007), the more violence escalates and perpetuates more violence. Protracted conflicts usually have phases of escalation and de-escalation of violence (seen in most contexts, like Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, sub-Saharan Africa and others), and this almost cyclical pattern gets increasingly more repetitive, self-perpetuating and intractable with time. Victims of violent conflicts go through a range of disabling experiences, from death of family members and displacement to torture and physical harassment. Staub (2006) notes that violent conflicts are not only traumatic for victims, but have lasting negative effects on those who committed atrocities as well as bystanders who did not intervene. In his study in post-conflict Rwanda, he found that

> basic needs for security, feelings of effectiveness, control over important events in one's life, positive identity, positive connections to other people and communities, and a comprehension of reality and of one's own place in the world have all been deeply frustrated.
>
> (p. 871)

Scholars like Galtung have highlighted the different layers of violence and its implications for peace and transformation. According to him, direct violence is visible and conducted in the form of overt behaviour, like riots, shootings, incarceration and torture. The more invisible and covert part is structural violence, that is, structural aspects of any society that is built

on power differentials and results in the systematic and historical discrimination and exploitation of certain communities. Class based differences, which include structural violence, like unequal access to opportunities and income, and years of deprivation, results in more direct violence, like hunger, starvation, malnutrition and death. Religious, racial and ethnic minorities face similar structural and direct violence over centuries sometimes. The complication with structural violence is that it is invisible and therefore often overlooked. Most peace initiatives and resolution strategies address direct violence and attempt to put an end to the same. However, Galtung believes that only when structural forms of violence are addressed and removed can any society move towards transformation and peace.

Social scientists have been deeply invested in examining the effects of violence exposure based on the understanding that these experiences have severe consequences for individuals and communities. One strand of enquiry has been to explore if violence breeds violence, a common assumption that is often used to explain collective violence which may seem otherwise inexplicable. This has been facilitated by the shifting focus within criminology from an individualistic lens of explanation of criminal or violent behaviour to an environmental and developmental frame. Similarly explanations of radical behaviour (including radical terrorism, genocide, violent separatism and insurgent movements) have also evolved from an individualistic lens, that is, ascribing radical violent behaviour to individual mental health issues, to more social and contextual factors, which include socio-economic deprivation, historical disadvantage and discrimination and exposure to a violent environment at an early age (Borum, 2011a). The shift in perspective and corroboration from findings has further highlighted the connective and possible causal link between experiencing extreme violence to exhibiting violent behaviour. For instance several studies have reported the association between violence exposure and violent behaviour by pointing out that children and adolescents exposed to various forms of violence at an early age are more likely to exhibit violence themselves (Weaver, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2008). A similar association has also been found for youth exposed to political violence in Northern Ireland, wherein exposure to sectarian violence predicted higher rates of aggression among young adolescents (Taylor, 2013). However Barber (2009a) points out that the path from victimization to perpetration of violence is much more complex than a simplistic linear explanation. Intersections of context, history, group-based identities, collective memory and beliefs, family environment and relationships, and individual personality factors are all significant contributors. Supporting Barber's claims are findings from a study of South African adolescents, wherein the association between exposure to violence and resulting symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were further complicated by socio-economic status and racial affiliations (Stansfeld et al., 2017).

Beyond the negative outcomes of traumatic experiences and the vicious cycle of violence, increasing evidence has been found in support of growth and recovery from violent experiences. Research in the area of posttraumatic growth has brought to light reported positive feelings of self-worth, self-perception, growth, interpersonal experience and strength among survivors of trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004). In Kashmir, research has indicated that age, higher perceived social support and more objective exposure to violence are positively associated with posttraumatic growth (Bhat & Rangaiah, 2015). It is interesting to engage with the positive outcomes of trauma experiences that extend the commonly assumed effects of violence beyond its simplistic paradigm of 'violence leads to more violence'. The findings complicate this assumption by showing that people who experience violence can appraise novel and unique coping mechanisms, meaning systems and recovery routes, which can sometimes lead to stronger self-perceptions and well-being.

Thus violence is a difficult and complicated aspect of intergroup conflict and needs much attention. It is important to understand why and how violence escalates in conflict as well as what the experience of violence entails for populations living in socio-political conflict. Exploring the nature and extent of violence exposure allows for a better understanding of the consequences of these experiences, both negative and positive, and reveals possibilities for transformation.

Exposure to violence (ETV) during conflict

The intricate relationship between conflict and violence, and the significant role played by the latter in how conflicts impact the lives of people, has led to a growing interest in the study of exposure to violence during intergroup conflicts. ETV is not merely physical exposure to violence; it is also direct and indirect confrontation with the physical, emotional and social milieu of conflict. ETV is measured in a number of ways, highlighting the different dimensions of this experience—it can be direct or indirect and of different intensities (high intensity exposure to explosions or beatings and low intensity exposure to images of violence) as well as determined by proximity to violence, relationship with the perpetrator; the nature of the violence itself (exposure to political violence, ethnic violence, gender based violence); and the number of incidents of violence, that is, single or multiple exposures (Baker & Kanan, 2003; Barber, 2009a; Giacaman, Shannon, Saab, Arya, & Boyce, 2007; Peterson & Elklit, 2010). Beyond direct encounters, violence is often transmitted, witnessed and felt in a number of ways that may not be obvious.

Collective exposure to violence includes the indirect ways in which an individual becomes a victim or witness to violence by being a part of a community that is involved in political, military or other forms of conflict.

Collective exposure includes those incidents of violence wherein the individual himself or herself may not be attacked directly but witnesses violence on others who are members of the same community. This can include family members, friends or strangers. It also includes witnessing attacks that are not directed at a person specifically but directed at a collective of people that form the community caught in violence—namely, incidents of bombardment, curfews and so on. Herman (1992, p. 1) stated that "witnesses as well as victims are subjected to the dialectic of trauma". Witnessing is not a passive act, and it includes several layers of engagement. Weingarten (2004) discusses how witnessing an act involves positions of making sense of the act, relating to or understanding the experience from the victim's perspective and empowerment or ability to act on the experience. The act of witnessing is complex and includes various cognitive and affective mechanisms, like empathy, fear, identification and anger. These emotions play out in different ways based on the relationship between the witness and the direct victim. While witnessing violence on close family members may elicit more depressive and anxious reactions, witnessing the same on unknown people can lead to aggression rather than grief (Lambert, Boyd, Cammack, & Lalongo, 2012).

More recently the conceptualization of collective violence has expanded beyond direct exposure and witnessing to include other indirect ways that an individual can be affected. For instance, Thabet, Abed and Vostanis (2002) found that children exposed to direct violence of home bombardment and demolition in Palestine were much more likely (56% against 25%) to experience severe posttraumatic stress than those who weren't. However, those children who had witnessed similar incidents indirectly (via media, adult conversations) expressed a higher degree of anticipatory anxiety and distress when compared to those whose houses had been bombarded. The authors highlight how living in consistent threat and being aware of ongoing conflict can induce reactions to violence beyond personal exposure. Often focussing on individual exposure to violence alone can limit the understanding of the ways in which a violent environment may affect an individual. Several studies have also spoken about the intergenerational transmission of memories of trauma, historical trauma and collective memory of violence that greatly influences victim narratives (Atkinson, 2002; Hammack, 2010; Stevents, Eagle, Kaminer, & Higson-Smith, 2013) This body of work concentrates on violence and trauma that is directed at a collective (group of people) and how these experiences become part of the social beliefs and norms guiding identity, which are then internalized by individuals (Bar-Tal, 2000; Kuzmanic, 2008). Survivors of traumatic events like genocide, war and displacement pass on the narratives of traumatization to their children. The younger members of the community thereby inherit a collective history of suffering, belief in victimization, threat perception, anxiety and guilt that could have serious repercussions for psychological well-being as well as out-group attitudes.

Knudsen (2009), in his ethnographic account of the violence between tribes in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, engages with the idea of collective violence very deeply. Referring to how the natives of the Palas Valley define acts of humiliation, dishonouring and captivity as violent, the author points out that the meaning of violence, and thereby the understanding of what constitutes as violent, is much broader than just physical violence. Direct physical attacks of any form, which are usually seen as violence or abuse, only capture a certain manifestation of violence while leaving out an ambit of experiences that come from living in an environment that is persistently unsafe and volatile.

Direct individual exposure and collective exposure can be seen as two distinct categories within the overall domain of exposure to violence, which may have different effects on the individual experiencing it and may impact his or her social and psychological life in ways that need to be explored separately. Moreover, it can be assumed that collective exposure to violence "may have different health outcomes and thus require management strategies that is distinct from methods specifically devised on the basis of our understanding of direct individual exposure" (Giacaman et al., 2007, p. 362). Unfortunately, attention to the distinct yet interrelated forms of violence that persist in a context of ongoing political conflict has been limited. There are several reasons for this, and the following chapter will discuss these methodological issues before moving on to the approach and conceptual foundation for the present work.

Summary

This chapter introduced the reader to the background and basic premise of the book: namely the context of large-scale intergroup conflict and its social psychological analysis. Starting off with a discussion on the concept of conflict, we delved into the various ways in which intergroup conflict has been distinguished from interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict. Thereafter we looked at some of the major schools of thought that have shaped theorization around conflict and traced the historical shift and evolution of the social psychological approach. Turning the focus to violent conflicts, the chapter concluded by discussing when, how and why conflicts become violent, and the need to understand and explore the various forms and manifestations of violence in conflict, specifically outlining the two important categories of direct personal exposure to violence and indirect witnessing.

2

RE-EXAMINING EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Shifting the focus to collective violence

Although exposure to conflict related violence is a widely researched topic, the majority of work in this area has followed a clinical-psychiatric framework focussing on exposure to traumatic events during war and violent conflicts, and its association with depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and similar clinical constructs. PTSD is a psychological condition comprised of dysfunctional behaviour following a severe traumatic incident. The symptoms involve recurring nightmares, reliving the traumatic experience or 'flashbacks' and being hyper-vigilant and anxious that the incident or threat will reappear. Simultaneously there is usually a loss of interest in activities, sporadic and extreme aggression, insomnia and inability to focus on daily life activities. It appeared as a distinct category in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM) sometime after the Vietnam War, when many of the returning war veterans exhibited several of these symptoms. PTSD can develop after a personal traumatic event, like sexual assault, as well as in situations of collective trauma, like wars and violent conflicts.

There is a rich body of work from different cultural contexts reiterating the strong association between exposure to war related violence and resulting symptoms of distress, depression and traumatization. Muldoon and Downes (2007) found a 10% higher rate of PTSD symptoms among youth in the aftermath of violence in Northern Ireland, which was positively correlated with multiple direct exposures to violence. Blattman and Annan (2010) found among youth who had been abducted during the conflict in Uganda that psychological distress was significantly predicted by the extent of violence exposure rather than the experience of being abducted. The protracted conflict in Sri Lanka has had similar consequences, with significantly high rates of PTSD in areas severely affected by the conflict, which once again correlated with exposure to violent attacks and conflict related displacement (Husain et al., 2011).

Elklit and Peterson (2007) did a cross-cultural analysis of exposure to traumatic events and the likelihood of developing PTSD among adolescents in four countries: namely, Lithuania, Denmark, Iceland and the Faroe

Islands. Even though the context was not of intergroup conflict, the historical developments in these countries and their present conditions had resulted in a high incidence of exposure to violence and trauma among the adolescents. Ninety percent of the participants reported experiences wherein they had either been exposed to direct violence or had witnessed at least one traumatic event. This study also made the distinction between direct and indirect exposure, and found that direct exposure was more significantly associated with the development of PTSD, as compared to witnessing or indirect forms of exposure. Also, having experienced multiple incidents of violence was a significant predictor of PTSD symptoms in all four countries, and women, on average, were more likely to develop PTSD than men. The same authors, in another study, with a Faroese sample, found a more significant role of indirect exposure, indicating that witnessing violence can sometimes be extremely traumatic because of its higher prevalence, feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, and the lack of social support in reaction to incidents that are more removed, as compared to direct victimization (Peterson, Elklit, & Gytz Olesen, 2010). In Palestine, Giacaman et al. (2007) found that both forms of exposure to violence were closely related to depressive tendencies, with the effect being greater among girls than among boys, and among adolescents living in refugee camps as compared to those living in cities and towns. Interestingly the difference in negative mental health conditions resulting from exposure to violence was not significantly different between those who had direct personal experiences and those who did not, thereby confirming that witnessing violent events and other forms of collective experiences were important predictors of psychological distress. Schaal and Elbert (2006) worked with orphans who had survived the Rwandan genocide, a decade after the actual event, to assess the presence of PTSD symptoms and traumatic stressors after a duration of time. They found a significant relationship between exposure to traumatic events and number of PTSD symptoms, where the strongest association was between number of PTSD symptoms and witnessing the murder of a parent. Sixty-one percent of respondents who had witnessed the murder of a parent met the criteria for PTSD diagnosis. This indicates the extremely important impact of witnessing violence, especially on family members and significant others, over and above the effect of personal exposure to violence.

Other researchers have pointed to the fact that direct and collective exposure to violence or witnessing violence may be correlated in many nuanced and important ways that need to be considered. Kaminer, du Plessis, Hardy and Benjamin (2013) talk about the concept of 'poly victimization' among populations living in contexts that are highly susceptible to violence for historical and sociocultural reasons. They found in their sample of South African youth that direct exposure to certain types of violence was highly correlated to witnessing violence of a similar nature. For instance, being a

victim of community violence was significantly correlated with witnessing domestic violence. Although this study was done in a locale not affected by armed conflict or violent political conflict, participants lived in neighbourhoods where violence was rampant, and youth were exposed to an unsafe environment. Moreover, the findings regarding the associations between the forms of violence highlight the fact that these categories are not exclusive, and one form of exposure is usually indicative or at the least in some way related to the likelihood of being exposed to another.

The complex association between forms and experiences of violence or trauma is highlighted by another study which looked at trauma exposure among a displaced community. Allden et al. (1996) surveyed a group of Burmese refugees in Thailand to find out their experiences of trauma before and after the violent episodes of 1988, and the levels of PTSD and depressive symptomatology at the time of the study. The findings revealed something interesting—cumulative trauma exposure was strongly associated with PTSD but specifically with two particular symptom patterns within the PTSD category: namely hyper-arousal and avoidance, the state of being overly aroused with anxiety at the thought of a recurrence of the traumatic event and the resulting tendency to avoid social situations and other engagements out of fear of the same. The authors highlight the specific association and call for the need to make similar studies more nuanced and detailed, focussing on forms and types of trauma, duration of exposure and time in-between, with particular categories of symptoms within the construct of PTSD. The study also reports on the coping mechanisms used by the refugees, who reportedly faced as many difficulties in exile as they did during the violence in their home countries. Interestingly, 75% of the participants reported having continued the pro-democracy struggle, and around 45% reported a sense of self confidence (derived from Buddhist philosophy) as a means of coping and surviving in exile. This was also the most inversely related to PTSD symptoms, pointing to the fact that the participants were engaging in various forms of cognitive and affective coping mechanisms in the aftermath of, and while dealing with, ongoing forms of violence.

Goenjian and colleagues (2000) explored the differences in traumatic symptoms after a natural disaster as compared to man-made political violence by comparing results from groups of survivors of both. Results showed no significant differences between severity and form of PTSD symptoms between the two groups, with both showing an elevated level of PTSD and correlated anxiety and depression. Moreover, both the samples were likely to have extended traumatic stress experiences, which, according to the authors, was because of the persistent reminders of threat, danger and damage in both environments. This indicated that, contrary to the understanding of a regular PTSD framework, existing and ongoing threats in the environment are likely to produce an extended state of traumatic reactions. The

impact of living in an environment of collective vulnerability and related everyday threats was also highlighted by Baker and Kanan (2003) in the West Bank area of Palestine. The psychosocial impact of military violence was measured with the Arabized versions of the Child PTSD Index and the Children's Depression Index on children living in close proximity, moderate proximity and remote distance from a point of aerial bombardment. PTSD and depressive symptoms were found to be above normal level among most of the children in Palestine, but the scores did not differ significantly between the three groups. The authors concluded that the lack of psychological security and a constant fear of being attacked overshadowed the impact of physical distance from an actual scene of violence.

Contexts of ongoing violence present characteristic peculiarities in terms of how people cope with and react to violence that is often significantly different from other contexts of traumatic experience. De Jong et al. (2011) assessed PTSD symptomatology among women in war-affected Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, to guide medical and mental health intervention strategies for the same. They found an elevated rate of PTSD among the participants (approximately 30%) but did not find any significant association between cumulative trauma exposure and the likelihood of developing PTSD. Moreover, even though the extent of violence exposure was high, the likelihood of reporting a potentially traumatizing event was considerably low. The researchers emphasize this point and suggest that in extreme conflict situations, like that in Mogadishu, people's perceptions of what is traumatizing is probably modified. In fact, their threshold for violence is elevated, relative to a general idea of trauma held by people outside that context, resulting in the mismatch between levels of exposure to violence and traumatic experience. Therefore, the interchangeable use of the concepts of exposure to violence and exposure to traumatic events, may be overstepping the contextual peculiarities of such violent conditions. It is important to distinguish between exposure to an actual external condition of violence and the experience of trauma, where the latter is more closely related to clinical diagnostic theories of PTSD and anxiety. Because trauma, and its experience, is subjective it cannot be synonymous with exposure to violence, and the latter may include a plethora of reactions and behaviours that are non-significant under any diagnostic criteria but indicative of the cognitive and affective processes that happen in such situations. It may be debated that violence and what is perceived as an episode of violence may also be subjective (Jones, 2002; Khan & Majumdar, 2017). The purpose of the study described in the following chapters of this book was to delve deeper into the actual events of violence and the exposure of the population to those, rather than understanding which experiences resulted in trauma or were perceived as traumatic.

These and several other research studies have shown the severe extent of traumatization in communities exposed to conflict related violence. Yet many of the findings have pointed at the need to expand the lens of

exposure to violence to include not only the complex ways in which violence is experienced but also the consequences of these experiences. While we see that a significant amount of effort has been dedicated to examining the health consequences of conflict, focussing primarily on negative health outcomes and relying on strict diagnostic frameworks have revealed complicated results, directing psychologists to question whether PTSD diagnosis captures all nuances of traumatization and experiences of violence.

Trauma exposure and debate around PTSD

While mainstream clinical psychology and psychiatric intervention in conflict areas has followed a posttraumatic distress framework, there has been a growing voice against this strict Western, medicalized understanding of trauma. Several arguments have been presented on the need to critically engage with a universal assessment of conflict experiences, especially in developing and non-Western contexts. First, Summerfield and others have located the development of PTSD as a socio-historical phenomenon that came out of the political needs of an affected American society in the aftermath of the failed Vietnam War. According to him, there was an urgent need to create a victim status for the returning veterans, who had to face severe shame and guilt for a war that had become largely unpopular. This was the time that a medical label like PTSD could help in consolidating negative psychological expressions, largely reminiscent of fear, guilt and anger, into a singular category that was based on military experience. Moreover, PTSD essentially became an anti-war political statement that highlighted how young men were unable to re-adjust to life and family due to their exposure to war related violence (Summerfield, 2001). This started the process of the medicalization of extreme violent experiences, which previously had scattered and diverse expressions, not just culturally but also historically. In fact, McNally (2015) confirms that the diagnostic criteria does not seem to be historically omnipresent, with war accounts indicating a vast range of neuropsychological symptoms among soldiers and survivors of previous wars. He believes that the cross-cultural presence of this psychiatric category, as evidenced by the vast literature supporting it, could be a result of the overwhelming influence of Western diagnostic and epistemological constructs that have permeated non-Western settings. The standardization and medicalization of a subjective experience of violence has largely constricted a deeper analysis of what trauma entails and how individuals process and cope with their experiences. This has led to confusing findings, as reported above, wherein scholars are surprised to see unexpected expressions of trauma related behaviour that do not fit a predetermined medical criteria: for instance the low reporting of traumatic experiences in contexts with violent conflicts or the buffering of its effects under the influence of religion and social support.

Researchers and practitioners have been concerned not only about the standardization of a concept like trauma, which can have multiple meanings and expressions, but also about the fact that the DSM-approved parameters of PTSD exclude culturally relevant trauma related information (Hinton & Lewis-Fernandez, 2010). What this implies, supported by findings (Bolton, 2001; Mollica et al., 1992; Shoeb, Weinstein, & Mollica, 2007), is that there are certain local, culture specific aspects of trauma experience that do not get measured by the usual items on standardized tools used to identify PTSD and similar conditions. However, these local ideas, beliefs and practices maybe meaningful to that population and therefore useful when exploring coping mechanisms and intervention strategies. Authors have emphasized making these tools more inclusive by incorporating culture specific items gathered through ethnographic research and other qualitative tools. Betancourt, Speelman, Onyango and Bolton (2009) found in a sample of Ugandan children and adults, through a rapid ethnographic data collection method, that even though locally termed syndromes were similar to the Western constructs of depression and anxiety, there were some typical, context specific elements of each of the syndromes that were culturally significant. For instance, the idea of 'bad conduct' was reiterated as a post violence exposure symptom and considered to be as damaging as those of depressed and anxious behaviour.

Ongoing conflict, continuous trauma and exposure to violence

The effort to separate the study of ongoing conflict from a post-conflict scenario was deeply felt in the South African context, where researchers observed that the threat of living in a persistently unsafe and threatening environment posed certain specific challenges that could not be adequately analyzed under a purely PTSD domain (Stevens, Eagle, Kaminer, & Higson-Smith, 2013). There is now an increasing focus on the fact that in situations of protracted conflict, like Kashmir, the community is not only recovering from past trauma (direct and collective) but is also in a constant state of impending danger. This nature of a 'Continuous Traumatic Stress' (CTS) situation not only creates the expectation of threat and danger but may also elicit a range of behaviours and symptoms that are either not addressed in the current PTSD framework or may be looked at in a way that is inappropriate given the nature of the external social context. For instance, Eagle and Kaminer (2013) point out that people living in situations of ongoing conflict may often seem distressed, anxious and unsure about their external environment, which can be perceived as an indicator of a PTSD symptomatology. However, the fact that these are real situations of uncertainty and danger, where such reactions and behaviours are natural, highlight that there is a mismatch between the parameters of the disease paradigm and its

application in these typical social contexts. Moreover, while vigilance and avoidance are symptomatic of PTSD, intervention strategies in contexts of ongoing conflict often include and encourage these behaviour patterns due to real-time external threats to safety. Since the threat of eminent danger to life is so persistent, it is not uncommon or strange for people to avoid going out too much and be constantly afraid, anxious and vigilant of their surroundings. This pattern can be all-consuming when the community has been affected by large-scale violence. However according to a medical PTSD framework, while this behaviour could qualify the individual for a diagnosis of disturbed mental health, it is important to question whether it is a sign of maladjustment or rather an optimal survival strategy that falls well within the 'normal' healthy functions of any individual. Proponents and supporters of the CTS framework thereby point out that distress diagnostic criteria can have fundamental limitations when applied to communities with sustained, repeated ongoing violence. Making this distinction is also significant when shifting the focus from an occupation with the past to thinking about the future. CTS suggests that beyond the preoccupation with past events—reliving, avoiding and engaging with them—people in situations of ongoing violence and continuous perceived threat are more invested in thinking about their futures and how they can be made more safe while managing and dealing with their current sources of anxiety (Eagle & Kaminer, 2013).

Living in a situation of ongoing conflict can be significantly more disturbing than exposure to past violence because the threat of impending danger disrupts associated aspects of functioning like family, school and so on (Pat-Horenczyk et al., 2013). Individuals experience a combination of the effects of actual exposure to violence and the fear of life threats as well as other psychosocial factors inducing distress, like increased concern for family members resulting in limiting and unfulfilling everyday experiences. While talking to young Kashmiris, this becomes apparent when they point out a looming sense of insecurity and the lack of safe spaces creating limitations on movement, recreation and choice in daily life (Khan & Majumdar, 2017). Stevens, Eagle, Kaminer and Higson-Smith (2013) elaborate on how such a conception of exposure to trauma and violence can open up space for a more cultural understanding of the same that directly challenges the bio-medicine-psychiatric-PTSD dominated approach that has informed our knowledge about this topic so for. The inadequacy of a PTSD framework in situations of ongoing conflict calls for a more holistic approach that may be qualitatively different and help in pointing out psychobiological specificities of that particular population. This approach is not only useful for intervention but also reduces the chances of over medicalization and stigmatization (Diamond, Lipsitz, & Hoffman, 2013). This is particularly relevant for the present book, given that the Kashmir Valley has been a context of ongoing conflict and continuous exposure to violence. To better understand its implications, the necessity of this conceptual distinction is important.

The critique presented here does not dismiss the importance of constructs like PTSD, depression and anxiety that are widely applied to gauge the mental health status of populations exposed to violence and are instrumental in gaining insight into these complex occurrences. However, it is important to consider the historical and political reasons behind the emergence of PTSD and the invincible position that it occupies when it comes to psychology's interest in war and conflict (Withuis, 2004). It is also necessary to look beyond these narrow medical categories towards other outcomes of trauma exposure. For instance, Muldoon and Lowe (2012) present a strong argument for why social identity, social representation and allied concepts that go beyond the individual and focus on his or her social environment are important to evaluate in a situation of conflict. The authors highlight how group identity and norms are salient when forming ideas about victimization related to trauma and cannot be ignored when the same is being assessed. Therefore, socio-demographic variables like gender, socio-economic status, education, race and religion need to be studied, along with an individual symptom based clinical evaluation. Moreover, sticking to a psychiatric lens of analysis leaves out the cognitive and affective functions of a large non-clinical group (who do not make the cut-off for PTSD or depression, for instance) that is essential to understanding how populations exposed to violence on the whole are perceiving, dealing with and coping with their experiences. While acknowledging the significant contribution of these studies to the understanding of trauma, one has to be critical of the *culture of trauma, a social identity of being victimized,* that results from growing dependence on a PTSD, mental health-based framework (Withuis, 2004). It not only leaves less room for a deeper evaluation of the thought processes and related behavioural outcomes of individuals exposed to violence, but, most importantly, it fails to bring to light positive resources like resilience and hope that are constantly being appraised by individuals to cope with the debilitating effects of violence (Barber, 2009b; Slone, 2009; Sousa, Haj-Yahia, Feldman, & Lee, 2013). Therefore, a broader approach to exploring the socio psychological consequences of exposure to large-scale violence would include going beyond the assessment of narrow distress outcomes and including emotional and behavioural outcome variables. An intense and threatening external environment like that of violent conflicts is often uncontrollable, uncertain and unpredictable, eliciting attribution processes that lead to negative emotions like frustration and anger (Betancourt, 1997). Violence involves multiple parties, and the actions of each may be perceived as intentional by the other. The emotions thus elicited may get entrenched in a cycle of repeated violence and frustration, becoming more widely and strongly held among members of the community. These emotions, directed at the in-group as well as the out-group, are internalized by group members, leading to emotional expression and consequent behaviour that conforms to the intergroup emotion (Mackie, Smith, & Ray, 2008).

Therefore it becomes increasingly essential to examine both negative and positive emotional and behavioural correlates of exposure to violence in a context of long-drawn conflict.

In the following chapters I present and discuss significant findings from a study conducted to explore the social psychological consequences of exposure to conflict related violence in the Kashmir Valley. Going beyond a medical model, the study approached the analysis of exposure to violence from a non-PTSD/clinical framework and explored the relationship between types and extent of exposure to violence with individual aggression, emotion regulation, hope and optimism.

Keeping in line with more contemporary social psychological literature that calls for a nuanced sociocultural and contextual understanding of violence, it was also important to question a simplistic relationship between exposure and related outcomes. This second conceptual theme is derived from the works of Barber and others who emphasize on the need to consider the moderating and mediating roles of individual, social and contextual factors that are important in shaping attitudes towards collective action, negative and positive emotions in conflict and capacities for coping with violence (Barber, 2009a; Layne et al., 2010; Punamaki, 2009).

Individual differences and intermediate factors

It is now evident that a sustained interest in evaluating the effects of war and violence has produced many novel, complex and interesting results across contexts, helping healthcare professionals to better gauge the emotional and social realities of communities in these regions. Increasingly, though, social psychologists are pointing out the limitations of making generalized and simplistic conclusions about these findings. Not only are cross-cultural frames important, but it has also become essential to view the relationship between violence exposure and consequent behaviour from a more holistic lens. Experiencing violence does not produce the same effects across individuals, nor do all communities and groups react to a violent situation in the same way. These differences in how individuals process violence and respond to a traumatic situation have invited the need to engage with corresponding socio psychological factors that influence this relationship. For instance, Chemtob and colleagues (2010) found that children who were exposed to terrorism showed significantly higher rates of emotional and behavioural problems when their mothers were found to have posttraumatic and depressive symptoms. The authors proposed that one of the reasons for this could be the mother's exposure to the violent situation, which may leave her less equipped to deal constructively with her child. Updegraff, Silver and Holman (2008) report on people's search for meaning and how that is closely related to coping with unexpected severe violence, such as that of the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York. They found that people indulged in

meaning making processes in the aftermath of collective violence as much as they do after direct exposure to violence. The authors infer that incidents of terrorist attacks and similar large-scale collective episodes of violence directly challenge people's ideas about invulnerability and safety, thus inducing the need to search for meaning. Moreover, the authors found that search for meaning after the experience of violence was more closely associated with PTSD and distress, thereby highlighting the fact that searching for and finding meaning are separate, and the former may not always facilitate constructive coping with trauma. The authors argue that those individuals who experience acute stress following a traumatic event, and search for meaning, may, in the long run, have the most difficulty in adjustment. This study signifies the individual differences in the way collective trauma is perceived, processed and coped with, pointing to the need to understand individual affective and cognitive capacities in the aftermath of collective violence. Spellings, Barber and Olsen (2012) conducted a study on personal, parental and ecological factors that influence youth's activism in Palestine. The positive association between parental factors and activism was inferred as indicative of the personal elements that play a significant role in a collective setting like conflict, determining the narrative that the youth adopts and projects in his or her behaviour.

In response to this growing call for more intricate and detailed understandings of how violence shapes behaviour and produces specific emotions, many researchers have started looking at 'mediating and moderating variables' in their overall models to examine the effects of exposure to violence in conflict. Mediating factors include those social and psychological conditions that influence the path from violence exposure to resulting behaviour. For example, if exposure to violence leads to aggression, given that not all individuals who experience violence become aggressive, what are the other factors that determine aggression? It could be family support, individual personality factors, cognitive inclination towards a biased view of the out-group or the situation, or a negative evaluation of the future (Barber, 2009a). These factors would then become mediating variables and be examined alongside the effects of violence to better explain how experiencing violence can predict resulting aggression. Moderators are similar extrinsic and intrinsic conditions that determine the differences in behaviour patterns in a larger group with a similar experience. While mediators help in explaining how and why violence can lead to a psychological outcome (violence exposure➜perceived threat and mistrust➜aggression or violence exposure➜positive orientation of future➜hope) moderators can give us a clearer picture on which sections of the population are likely to exhibit a certain kind of behaviour. This is done by examining the interaction effect of one variable like violence exposure with another intermediating variable category like gender or self-esteem (violence exposure * gender * boys show more aggression than girls or violence exposure * self-esteem * individuals

with high self-esteem show low levels of radical behaviour as compared to those with lower self-esteem). By including this extra level of analysis researchers have been able to present a more nuanced and comprehensive picture of the impact of violence. Most importantly it has become abundantly clear that an external situation like conflict may result in a consistent and common reality for many (exposure to conflict related violence) which does not sufficiently predict individual and group behaviour. Instead this environment interacts with, or is dependent on, several intermediating factors—cultural, historical, social and psychological—that decide the behavioural outcome. This approach to the examination of collective trauma therefore not only steps outside a restricted medical view but also places individual experiences and responses to trauma within a larger interconnected and interacting whole. This whole consists of group history and collective memories, socio-economic background, social identities, family, peers and individual personality. A good example of this comes from Moore and Aweiss's (2002) study assessing the psychosocial correlates of hatred among Palestinian, Jewish and Arab adolescents. The authors found many intricate associations between political ideologies, group identification, religiosity and attitude towards peace in the participants' responses, which also differed across the groups. Out-group hatred was the strongest among Palestinians for Jewish settlers, clearly indicating the sociocultural context of the Palestinian struggle, which the participants identified with. Among the Jewish participants, those who were less religious and more secular tended to be more democratic and pro-peace in their attitudes, and reported lower levels of hatred towards the out-group. Thus the study highlights issues that are important to identify and explore in a conflict involving multiple parties, and how adherence to certain group identities and norms relates to political and social attitudes, especially towards the out-group, which may then perpetuate anti-resolution and pro-violence or pro-conflict actions and behaviour. The findings appropriately move beyond a contextual and situation-based understanding of ETV and include aspects of mindset-religious and political attitudes, views about the world and the 'other', that interplay with identity based choices and an external situation of violence in shaping individual emotions and behaviour.

Extremist mindset

Mindset is a psychological construct that represents the unique amalgamation of external cues and personal dispositions that form a set of beliefs and attitudes that determine individual behaviour (Stankov, Higgins, Saucier, & Knezevic, 2010). Mindset is that general orientation towards an external or internal object, person or situation that predetermines our behaviour towards them. It plays a strong cognitive function in human behaviour and may predispose an individual to be open to, or be prejudiced

towards, certain situations. Snyder (2002) believes that individuals behave according to pre-conceived notions and prejudices, and often do not assess each new situation or information in a logical way by evaluating all possibilities. Mindset in the context of India has been conceptualized as "a configuration of collectively held beliefs, preferences and action orientations that let Indians respond to their environment in particular ways" (Sinha et al., 2009, p. 1). The authors reiterate the peculiar tendency of this mindset to be full of discrepancies and contradictions which lead to an inconsistency between what one claims to believe and how one behaves in realistic circumstances. There is an implicit duplicity or an ability to synthesize diverse and often contrasting beliefs and values, drawn from traditional sources of knowledge and acquired over a long history of co-existing cultural differences. In this duality is included the contradiction of collectivism and individualism, materialism and spirituality, morality and self-interest and destiny and karma. McGuigan and Popp (2007) have discussed three primary mindsets in adulthood, namely (i) Instrumental Mindset, which involves "an inability to think abstractly and a preoccupation with satisfying one's concrete needs". The authors believe that individuals with this mindset "understand the other's perspective through opposition and prefer to deal with conflict through cajoling, persuading, threatening and retaliation". (ii) Affiliative Mindset, which is "characterized by a strong identification with the group to which s/he belongs, and in conflict situation those with this mindset either disengage from the relationship or change one's stance to be in agreement with the other". (iii) Lastly Self-authoring mindset, in which people "have the capacity to take many different perspectives at the same time and view conflict as a necessary element of human relationship" (pp. 225–229).

Extremism and radical thought are aspects of mindset that emerge out of the inflexibility of thought and an inability to perceive alternate perspectives, which is further perpetuated by escalating conditions. Common themes in the existing literature on radicalization and violent extremism appear to be attached to the ideas of material deprivation and related grievances, which escalate to ideas of perceived injustice, blaming and the perception that the out-group is intentionally harmful. This is followed by the indoctrination of shared beliefs and formation of group ideology and shared identity, which can, in turn, justify the use of violence (Borum, 2011b). Hogg and Adelman (2013) emphasize self-uncertainty as a root of extremism, which leads to the adoption of extreme societal beliefs when an individual seeks out groups that provide a sense of certainty and possibility, and strongly identifies with them. Bartlett, Birdwell and King (2010) found that radicals reported a high degree of social exclusion, distrust of the government and disconnection from their local community.

Social identity and moral beliefs, which are often intertwined with ideologies propagated during conflicts, are related to how people develop

certain attitudes that facilitate or inhibit extremist action (Bartlett et al., 2010; Borum, 2011a). Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva and Medin, (2011) talk about 'sacred values' that are strongly associated with what individuals of a group are willing to compromise. These values come out of moral and religious teachings but also include identity-based choices. According to the authors, when certain sacred values related to territory, religion and identity are challenged it may be more difficult for individuals who adhere to these values strongly to be open to change or compromise, thereby opting for violent action or resistance. McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) emphasize that radicalizing processes observed at a group level are often reactive, pointing to the fact that much of intergroup hate, stereotyping and related extremist ideas start as a reaction to real situations of perceived injustice and perceived threat. Wessells and Kostelny (2009) reiterate the negative outcomes of adopting a militant identity that is often seen among youth soldiers, whereby they are prone to use violence and exhibit greater levels of aggression in post-conflict situations.

Extremism, religiosity and authoritarianism are closely associated with exposure to violence and often mediate the effect of the former on psychosocial, emotional and behavioural variables. Hobfoll, Canetti-Nisim and Johnson (2006) explored the complex relationship between trauma exposure, PTSD and the role of psychosocial resources among Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel. Interestingly, the authors found a link between resource gain after trauma and support for political violence, while PTSD was associated with ethnic exclusion and authoritarianism, and not support for violence. This indicates that support for violence may be determined by a number of psychosocial factors, over and above exposure to violence, and that ETV alone does not imply an increased validation of violent behaviour. Laufer and Solomon (2011) found that exposure to terror and fear was positively associated with intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic personal orientation, respectively, and intrinsic religiosity had a significant decreasing effect on the relationship between exposure to violence and posttraumatic symptoms. They concluded that religiosity, specifically of intrinsic orientation, acts as a coping mechanism for those under stress, enhancing positive capacities of resilience. Canetti, Hall, Rapaport and Wayne (2013) have proposed a theoretical model that describes the relationship between exposure to political violence and extremist political attitudes. The authors found through a series of studies conducted in Northern Ireland, as well as in Palestine and Israel, that violence exposure is positively associated with extremist political attitudes that support militant ideas of violence and out-group hatred, and this relationship is mediated by psychological distress as well as threat perception. The perception of threat, predicted by psychological distress, was inversely associated with support for peace and conciliatory action in situations of ongoing conflict. The authors deduced that in situations where people are constantly living

in danger, the perceived threat leads to the encouragement of extremist and exclusionist ideologies, and makes the possibility of peace that much harder.

Living in a situation of conflict produces emotional reactions and cognitive styles that could generate specific long-term beliefs. These beliefs become part of the general mindset of individuals surviving with violence and can become extreme, radical and militant under conditions that either facilitate extremist thought or thwart the reaching of desirable ends. A militant-extremist mindset tends to be rigid and pro-violent, and have low acceptance of deviant and non-conforming information, and often perpetuates a violent and fearful image of the world. Saucier, Akers, Shen-Miller, Knezevic, and Stankov (2009) have closely studied the militant extremist mindset and its association with concepts like radicalism and terrorism. According to them while terrorism may stem out of a militant extremist mindset, it is not the same since militant extremism is a broader behavioural pattern related to mindset and other psychological constructs, whereas terrorism is more of a method or tactic.

> Militant extremism can be defined as a zealous adherence to a set of beliefs and values with a combination of two key features-i) advocacy of measures beyond the norm (extremism) and ii) intention and willingness to resort to violence (militancy).
>
> (p. 256)

The authors believe that studying this mindset can help us better understand extremist violence and its presence or absence in different groups. Particularly why such a mindset is developed, shared and strengthened in situations of perceived injustice, threat and ongoing conflict could highlight important social psychological motivators in ideological and political struggles. Towards this aim, Saucier et al. (2009) identified the general thinking patterns of violent extremist groups by accumulating statements that were given by, and about, extremist groups from different parts of the world. Sixteen themes were identified, including justifications for the use of violence, loss of sacred power, catastrophizing events, glorification of death in order to serve the cause, dehumanization of the enemy, perception that modernity and modern institutions like civil government are bad, belief in supernatural intervention and use of glorified rhetoric. It was also found that samples drawn from statistically 'normal populations', that is, university students, also exhibited some of the thinking patterns that were common among extremist militant groups. This suggested that an extremist mindset might not be far removed from a general imagination and common beliefs, and in times of mobilization or active resistance, it may only take focussed interpretation and framing to channel already existing thoughts into militant extremist action.

Based on the themes derived from textual and linguistic analysis, a scale was developed in order to explore aspects of the militant-extremist mindset in the general population. Analysis revealed three distinct and related dimensions: namely, Pro-violence or support for violence; perception of a Vile world, that is, the belief that the present world, government and economy are corrupt and harmful; and Divine intervention or the belief in religious sanctions that justify the dominant group ideology. Several follow-up surveys, including samples from multiple countries, revealed that all three dimensions of the extremist mindset were found among normal youth populations, cross-culturally, to varying degrees.

A significant outcome of an extremist mindset is the acceptance of violence as a means to the desired end. A pro-violent attitude is usually acquired over time, evident in the history of a number of conflicts wherein moderate political demands have, with time, been sidelined or replaced by violent action. Researchers have investigated attitudes towards violence across populations and found that it is closely associated with how individuals react to and process the experience of violence as well as negative emotions like aggression (Cotten et al., 1994; Wessells & Kostelny, 2009). For example, bullying behaviour is mediated by a favourable attitude towards violence wherein those who have a more favourable attitude towards violence stemming from past exposure are likely to endorse bullying more than those who do not (Stoddard, Varela, & Zimmerman, 2015). In keeping with the violence-breeds-violence cycle spoken about previously in the book, it is not surprising that violent environments accentuate a pro-violent attitude, which leads to engagement with violent activities. Yet individuals living in areas affected by violent conflicts show great resilience and dis-engagement from violent political beliefs and action. Stankov, Saucier, and Knezevic (2010) found in their cross-national survey that people from Serbia and Chile, two countries with histories of severe conflict, scored the lowest on the pro-violence scale, showing that long-term conflict can lead to a desire for resolution, peace and progress as opposed to militant extremism.

The second dimension of belief in a dangerous world and malevolent others stems from a strong sense of mistrust and injustice that results in a long-term 'grudge' against political, economic and social institutions. Social psychological work has shown that the difficulty of living in on-going conflict leads to negative beliefs about the world. These beliefs become increasingly prevalent in contexts of intractable conflict and freeze attitudes towards the out-group (Bar-Tal, 1998; Hameiri et al., 2014; Punamaki, 2009). A violent attack, either direct or collective, immediately appraises cognitive and emotional resources in seeking answers and making sense of the situation. Questions like "why is this happening to us" and "when will this get better?" followed by the lack of tangible or logical explanations to the same lead to the strengthening of a belief that

'others' are out to get us. The belief in an unjust world that comes out of negative experiences and perceived injustice can attune individuals to perceive future events as unjust and intentionally obstructing their attempts to achieve a personal or collective goal (a collective goal could be autonomy, identity-based demands, religious expansion and so on). Additionally the belief in an unjust world is associated with heightened anger and a lack of optimism (Lench & Chang, 2007). In the previously mentioned cross-national survey, Stankov et al. (2010) found that Serbia (with a recent violent conflict) and Malaysia (with a prominent Muslim population, who likely feel a sense of threat, injustice and collective victimization) scored the highest on this dimension.

The third dimension of the extremist mindset scale relates to religiosity and belief in a supreme power. Belief in religious sanctions and ideas that draw strength from a divine force can help individuals to make sense of conflict, cope with trauma and justify participation in perpetuating violence. Moix (2006) points out that religious beliefs and religious institutions can play a destructive as well as a constructive role in intergroup conflict. On the one hand while divine support, intervention and power derived from a supernatural source can act as an excuse or justification for violent acts (Stankov, Knezevic, Saucier, Radovic, & Milonavovic, 2018) they can also be instrumental in posttraumatic growth and recovery (Laufer, Solomon, & Levine, 2009). This complex and dualistic nature of religious belief makes it an important aspect of mindset that is commonly called into question when faced with uncertain and stressful environments. Individuals and groups draw upon cultural and spiritual belief in times of strain as it helps them to maintain hope and continue through difficult times. Yet this resource, which generates resilience and is closely associated with moral beliefs of right and wrong, can be mobilized into amoral and disengaged acts of violence. Seul (1999) believes that the essential role of religion in conflict is due to its close association with identity. He writes,

> In all their multifarious expressions and dimensions, the world's religions answer the individual's need for a sense of located-ness-socially, sometimes geographically, cosmologically, temporally and metaphysically. Religious meaning systems define the contours of the broadest possible range of relationships- to self; to others near and distant, friendly and unfriendly; to the non- human world; to the universe; and to God, or that which one considers ultimately real or true. No other repositories of cultural meaning have historically offered so much in response to the human need to develop a secure identity. Consequently, religion often is at the core of individual and group identity.

(p. 558)

Considering the central role of religious beliefs in many violent conflicts, it has become increasingly important for social psychologists to examine which aspects of identity are served and become prominent when attached to religion. It is now widely believed that religion does not lead to conflict per se, but when the fundamental concepts of non-violence, forgivingness and altruism, preached by most world religions, are directly challenged by societal and material realities (lack of resources, discrimination, deprivation, occupation, oppression, colonialism and imperialism) there is an increasing emphasis on cohesive factors of religion in compromise of other values and teachings. Religious beliefs, therefore, are a significant aspect of mindset that can have important implications for emotional and behavioural consequences.

Foundations of the research

This chapter outlines a few significant theoretical and conceptual developments in the social psychological approach to the study of individual and collective coping with large-scale conflict. These ideas have guided my own research on the psychosocial outcomes of exposure to political violence in the Kashmir Valley. This research was guided by and aimed towards:

- A non-clinical assessment of exposure to violence, where the focus is on experiences of collective violence along with direct experiences. This is in line with the expanding theoretical lens on exposure to political violence and its psychological consequences, which highlights that witnessing violence and living in threatening environments can produce significant alterations in emotional and cognitive functions, and affect consequent behaviour.
- A culturally informed analysis of violence and response to the experience of violence. This is done by (a) looking at the field as a context of ongoing conflict, (b) looking at the field as a non-Western setting with an atypical historical and cultural trajectory (elaborated in the next chapter), (c) critically engaging with contextual implications of adopted measures and (d) integrating observations from the field and discussing findings in light of these observations.
- A nuanced understanding of the effects of exposure to violence, gained by examining intermediate factors that can moderate the relationship between ETV and behavioural outcomes. The current research adopted three aspects of an extremist mindset, that is, (i) support for violence, which is the endorsement of and the use of violence to achieve a purpose; (ii) the idea of a vile, evil or miserable world that is against the well-being of the person or group in question; and (iii) belief in a divine power which represents a sense of religious and spiritual sanction on actions towards a specific purpose.

- An interdisciplinary exploration combining literature from history, sociology, political science and psychology to deeply engage with the nature and development of the conflict in Kashmir. In building the background and context, I have drawn from all sources of material on Kashmir, from academic papers to online blogs. This was important to understand the nature of violence and related experiences, and the repercussions for the community at large.
- Lastly, a self-reflective approach that tries to be mindful of the researcher's positioning and related experiences while conducting fieldwork in Kashmir. While largely following a quantitative method, the analysis is influenced by my interactions with people I lived and worked with, making the analysis richer and more meaningful. This also leads back to several other social psychologists quoted in this chapter who encourage a contextually informed analysis that combines observations, narratives and other inputs to make sense of statistical data findings.

On the basis of these conceptual pillars the following chapter discusses the context in detail before moving on to the research design and method.

Summary

This chapter outlines the basic conceptual framework of the book. It starts off by presenting a brief summary of the dominant approach to the study of the psychological consequences of ETV and presents the main critique of this medical/clinical approach. This is done by highlighting the specific factors responsible for the development of PTSD as the dominant mental health criteria for populations exposed to violence and the limitations therein. Moreover the particular nature of ongoing conflict is discussed as a special context that requires going beyond a PTSD approach. Following the first conceptual foundation, the second main foundation of the book derives from contemporary social psychological work that calls for more nuanced explorations into how violence is processed by individuals. In line with this, the chapter discusses at length the psychological concept of extremist mindset that is included in the study as a moderator. Lastly the chapter points out the guiding theoretical and methodological ideas that have shaped this attempt.

3

THE CONFLICT IN THE KASHMIR VALLEY

Youth, extremism and psychological consequences

Brief overview of the conflict

The much contested land and identity of 'Kashmir' has an equally contested history. Scholars have argued and outlined varying accounts of the origin and development of the conflict. Mathur (2014) believes that the discrimination and exploitation that emerged during the Dogra rule in the 1800s can be seen as the beginning of a multitude of factors that resulted in the ongoing struggle for identity assertion. The 'Kashmir' issue, as we know today, took shape under the dubious circumstances of the Indian Independence movement and partition of erstwhile India into Hindustan (present India) and Pakistan. As a region with a Muslim majority, Kashmir was looked at by Pakistan as a de facto part of their nation. However, at the helm of Indian nationalism and nation-building, India was unwilling to take into consideration this aspect of the Kashmiri identity. The then Maharaja of Kashmir was asked to choose who agreed to accede to India in return for military protection against invasion from the North Western Frontier Province. The peculiarity of a region with a Muslim majority population being included in a seemingly secular nation with a Hindu majority, irrespective of the fact that the partition was imagined on the lines of religious differences between Hindus and Muslims, and had resulted in extreme violence and hostilities, could not be ignored for long. Moreover, Kashmir's being located in-between the newly formed nations of India and Pakistan, and thereby caught in rivalries that were to produce many coming wars, made the stability of the region even more questionable. Khan (2009) notes how the Line of Control (LOC) that split the region in two gave a picture of the opposing narratives of a Kashmir that was being advocated by the neighbouring nations. While Azad Kashmir for Pakistan became Pakistan Occupied Kashmir for India, Occupied Kashmir for Pakistan is commonly referred to as the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India. Yet scholars like Chowdhary (2010) argue that the conflict did not possess a religious character initially and was purely a contestation over political identity. It was much later and around the time of the militancy and forced

displacement of Pandits (the group of upper caste Kashmiri Hindus) in the late 1980s that the political conflict took on an ethno-religious claim. It is also believed that the initial leaders of the resistance movement in the Valley imagined Kashmir as a secular state with a distinct cultural identity. Kashmiri Hindus were seen as an integral part of this identity (Behera, 2006). The inclusive essence of 'Kashmiriyat', the distinct identity of belonging to the land and culture of Kashmir, however, has been challenged by others who point back to the discrimination along religious lines that existed during the Dogra rule (1846–1947) and was encouraged under British colonial rule (Hassan, 2010; Tak, 2013).

After independence, with increasing unrest, the Indian government, through Sheikh Abdullah, proposed to hold a plebiscite in the Valley that was to be the chance for the people of Kashmir to convey their voice and opinion. However, due to the hostile external environment that was created during the Cold War era, India refused to hold the proposed plebiscite. This was an important milestone in the history of the conflict as this event was looked at as a breach of trust by the Indian state and a missed opportunity to reassure Kashmiri people that their needs were valued. The politics that followed was driven by sectarian vested interests that could not be integrated into a singular case for the people of Kashmir. Both countries (India and Pakistan) stationed troops in and around the Valley, and repeated wars left the civilians even more disillusioned. Post-1980, Kashmir entered a phase of extreme terror and violence marked by fundamentalism, secessionist demands, Hindu-Muslim clashes, armed conflict between insurgents and the Indian Army, and ruthless exploitation of civilians by both (Behera, 2006; Duschinski, 2009). The movement that begun towards the end of the 1980s initially drew popular support, and large numbers of Kashmiri youth crossed borders for training and participated in a guerrilla movement for an independent and separate land of Kashmir. The movement, however, gradually declined due to multiple shifts in leadership and corruption in purpose and direction (Behera, 2006). The infiltration of military and paramilitary troops that began at this time to combat the insurgency continued and proved to be disastrous for the resolution of the conflict. This also marked the beginning of the ongoing state of extreme militarization of the region, becoming the most significant cause of distress, fear and helplessness among Kashmiri civilians. Kazi (2009) writes

> Kashmir exemplifies the intersection between militarisation for external defence and the use of the military for domestic repression, an intersection that has transformed the Indian state into a source of deep insecurity for its citizens and converted the Indian military into an illegitimate agent of repression.
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> (p. 15)

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With militarization and the impunity accorded by special acts that protect armed forces from criminal prosecution, there has been several reported cases of brutalities against civilians, including forced entry into homes, random arrest and interrogation, torture, sexual exploitation, fake encounters and forced disappearances, and the disproportionate use of tear gas bombs and pellets against protesting youth. The anthropologist Duschinski (2009, 2010) talks about the construction of the 'Kashmiri' person as an immediate threat to state power, which then legitimizes the use of coercion and military force to subjugate the assumed intention of the subject. She reiterates how the militarization of Kashmiri lives has created a perpetual state of subjugation, fear, threat and insecurity for all Kashmiris who can at any point in time be detained and/or harmed on suspicion.

Kashmir Valley has been the seat of political armed violence for more than three decades. During this time, the nature of the conflict, its purpose, its mode of operation and the involvement of participants has undergone many shifts, creating a seemingly unresolvable state of conflict. Khan (2009, p. 69) points out that "the political violence in Kashmir has its roots in the acts of political elites and the weaknesses of institutions, both in the bureaucracy and in party organizations". Ganguly and Bajpai (1994, p. 402) view the conflict in Kashmir as a "mix of ethnic religious and territorial battles; irredentism; hypernationalism; and economic reform and turbulence leading to protracted interstate and intrastate conflict". They comment "the conflict over Kashmir is less a contest over strategic ground and resources as it is a contest over competing visions of nationalism and state building". Irrespective of periodic talks between involved parties, intervention policies and initiatives for reconstruction and development, the Valley continues to witness repeated outbreaks of violence, protests and unrest: the Amarnath land dispute of 2008, the Shopian rape case and agitation of 2009, stone pelting, mass protests and armed violence in 2010, the burning of the Dastageer Sahib shrine in Srinagar and consequent clashes between armed forces and civilians, and the militant attack on Indian security personnel and other episodes of violent clashes in 2013 (Yasir, 2013). More recently, the rise of Hindu nationalist parties and aligned factions across India has led to an increased sense of threat among native Kashmiris. Various reports claim that armed militancy in the 1990s, which was largely supported by Pakistan as an anti-India strategy, has now been replaced by an internal resistance, fuelled by memories of violence, lack of acknowledgement, polarization of identities and general resentment (Gettleman, 2018; Wilkes & Bukhari, 2017). Shah (2019) describes how the internal politics surrounding the Kashmiri call for separation and self-determination has evolved over the last decade; 2008 to 2015 was a period marked by street protests when militancy was thought to have been reduced permanently. However, the author notes that a new wave of Kashmir militancy has been revived and made possible by the spread of the Internet and social media,

facilitating recruitment and networking. He refers to the rise of Burhan Wani, a young self-proclaimed militant who gained widespread popularity on social media and whose sudden encounter and death in 2016 started off a fresh wave of violence, attacks and counter-attacks in the Kashmir Valley. After a period of reported encounters and armed battles since 2016, the attack on a convoy carrying members of the Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on 14th February, 2019, has marked the most recent escalation of violence, eliminating any chances of resolution, at least in the near future.

During this long history of intractable conflict, the damage to loss and livelihood has been tremendous. Data up to 2015 reveals that more than 70,000 people have lost their lives in the conflict; 150,000 Kashmiris, mostly Pandits, have been displaced; and as many as 8,000 people are reported missing (Housen et al., 2018). As in the armed insurgency that erupted in 1989, the majority of people killed and injured during the uprisings in 2008, 2010 and thereafter have been young Kashmiris (Behera, 2006; Dar, 2014). While almost 50% of youth respondents in a study by Medicins Sans Frontier (Jong et al., 2006) reported not feeling safe and having experienced personal and collective violence, a similar study in 2014 revealed that the

> The experience of violence, the fear of repercussions for speaking out, the shrinking of traditional social spaces (such as public parks, cultural gatherings, platforms for showcasing art and debating issues of concern), and the frequent restrictions put on the movement of people and modes of communication

continue to be distressing for the youth in Kashmir (Dar, 2014, p. 3).

Youth in violent conflicts

The concept and boundaries of 'Youth' are problematic and are perceived in multiple ways all over the world. Not only is the age range of youth different across nations—the psychosocial functioning of this life stage is fluid and dynamic, to say the least. The United Nations General Assembly has fixed the age of youth as between 15 and 24 years. The concept of youth is closely related to the sociocultural and temporal context. For instance the experience and struggles of youth four decades ago were completely different from 'millennials' today, whose life experiences are strongly influenced by technology and social media. Thus, youth is more a conceptual category than a universal age demarcation, and it changes across time and place. According to the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (2005) youth is a phase of transition between childhood and adulthood, intricately associated with specific issues of identity, independence, responsibility and status.

Youth have been perceived in diverse ways when it comes to violent conflicts. While, on the one hand, research has focussed on the effect of conflict on the degradation of opportunities, physical and sexual trauma, and mental health consequences among youth, another substantial body of work has explored the role of youth as perpetrators and active participants in conflict The United Nations World Youth Report (2003) highlights the magnanimity of loss and damage that young people all over the world have suffered due to violent conflicts. According to the report, nearly "6 million children" have been left mutilated, while double that number have been rendered homeless. Around "1 million children are orphaned", and these varied experiences of personal and collective trauma have resulted in a staggeringly high level of reported trauma in about 10 million survivors. The report further emphasizes that, "for young people, survival takes precedence over education, environmental protection and other development issues". The count of Internally Displaced People or refugees rendered homeless as a result of conflict is also close to 50 million worldwide, with young girls in particular being significantly more prone to rape, mutilation, torture and trafficking (Youth and Conflict, p. 374).

A few researchers have examined the relation between the existence of a disproportionately large youth cohort in a country's population, which is called a 'Youth Bulge', and the potential for violent conflict (Fuller & Pitts, 1990; Goldstone, 2002; Staveteig, 2005; Urdal, 2006). In a report from 2004, Urdal analyzed data over five decades to report that large proportions of youth in a population significantly correlates with an increased risk of domestic armed conflict, especially under the condition of economic stagnation (Urdal, 2004). Lack of economic opportunities cause frustration and increase levels of grievance among the young, who can then be easily recruited and mobilized politically. However, Hilker and Fraser (2009) and Sommers (2006) point to the inherent issues with such a simplistic demographic map of the association between a disproportionate number of youth and opportunities for violence. They emphasize that, although the presence of youth cohorts may sometimes be correlated with possibilities of open clashes and protests, it is this section of the population that needs to be understood and partnered with for any move towards conflict transformation. Therefore, it is not merely the presence of a large section of youth in a population that sparks conflict but the gap in addressing their needs and grievances.

The role of youth as agents of change and peacebuilding has also been recognized but not explored sufficiently. Felice and Wisler (2007) have listed a number of youth organizations from various countries that are working actively in resistance to totalitarian governments, for promotion of human rights and in peacebuilding and rehabilitations of people affected by war and violence. Rajendran, Veronesi, Mohammad and Mala (2006) report on the hopeful attitudes of youth exposed to violence in the Philippines

and how large sections of the youth population refrain from the use or endorsement of violence. These and similar findings highlight the need to engage with the examination of needs, attitudes, emotions and behaviours exhibited by youth in violent conflicts, and to think about the constructive ways in which positive emotions can be mobilized towards conflict resolution and peace. "As they are trained to be soldiers, youth need to be supported as builders of peace and democracy. Their potential and power has to be developed in order to sustain a process of change" (Felice & Wisler, 2007, p. 25). Irrespective of their most significant role in conflict, it is without a doubt that youth across the world have been affected by large-scale conflicts as victims of direct violence as well as indirectly through the damage to structural and collective resources and opportunities.

Kashmiri youth and exposure to violence

The present generation of youth in Kashmir has largely grown up in an environment of violence and hostility. The origin of the political conflict in Kashmir, though rooted in various historical developments, took a certain form in the late 1980s, a time that saw the rise of an armed militancy fighting for rights to self-determination and the shaping of an ideology that has greatly influenced the Kashmiri narrative thereafter. The young participants included in the present study were infants and young children at the time of the onset of the insurgency. They experienced the height of Kashmiri separatism and violence during their childhoods in the 1990s. This was a time marked by violent exchanges between Kashmiri militants and the Indian Army. Military crackdowns (entry into and checking of civilian homes in search of ammunitions and information, usually accompanied by arrests of young men), curfews, violent clashes, bombings and gun battles were regular incidents during this phase of the conflict. The present Kashmiri youth experienced conflict related violence, through their formative years, at a direct, personal level where some of them were physically attacked as children and to a large extent at a collective level, by witnessing violence on family members, neighbours and in the community in general (Khan & Majumdar, 2017).

Today, the condition in Kashmir is blatantly precarious, and a state of protracted conflict continues. As is typical of such conflicts, there have been periodic escalations of violent episodes in which the current Kashmiri youth, again, have been active participants as well as severely affected by counter violence (Daniel, 2013; Dar, 2014). There is a constant threat to their physical and personal safety, coupled with destabilization and inaccessibility to social, economic and political resources (Sudan, 2007). The pervasive situation of conflict has resulted in a perpetual state of fear marked not only by outbreaks of direct violence but also by collective difficulties, like closing down of schools, curfews and shutting down of cities, inaccessibility to the

Internet and mobile phone networks, and so on. Through a conversation with a Kashmiri friend some years back I realized how many Kashmiri students who go to universities outside Kashmir are unable to apply with their non-Kashmiri cohorts because of the delay in their paperwork. Due to curfews and closing down of universities in the Valley, oftentimes students' certificates take one or two more years to be processed, leaving them unable to apply to other institutions for further studies or work. Consequently, they lose out on time, and the completion of their educational courses takes longer than it does for others.

Alongside personal accounts of harassment and torture, Kashmiri youth have aligned themselves with the overriding Kashmiri identity that is viewed as being under threat and in need of revival and protection. This threat has created many images of collective victimization that is perceived to be against the community of Kashmiris (and often Kashmiri Muslims) as a whole and as being perpetrated by the opposition against the people of Kashmir. Bhat (2018) presents an engaged account of the aspirations and anxieties of the current generation of youth in Kashmir. His study indicates the deep-seated frustration and loss of trust towards traditional political institutions among this group, which has increasingly taken to alternate forms of political engagement to voice their opinions and express their anger. Along with the belief in denial of justice there is a sustained fear of threat to the collective cultural identity of being Kashmiri that resonates with the youth. They are suspicious of the high levels of corruption and lack of educational and economic opportunities. The author writes,

> Being the group that has suffered many brutalities during this conflict, the memory of which is seared into their minds- have resulted in a specific mode of political discourse, self-understanding, and patterns of political engagements. Such modes of behavior are manifest in their lack of interest in formal/ conventional politics, a scepticism about the strength and reach of the local government, and distrust in the major Indian democratic institutions governing Kashmiri society. But this does not imply that Kashmiri youth are politically apathetic; instead they are politically hyper-engaged with more radical political views and they are potentially more inclined to participate in protests, social media campaigning, and partaking in general strikes.
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> (p. 215)

The use of alternate media and creative art forms has become increasingly popular among Kashmiri youth, who are using online blogs and forums for political expression (example Kashmir Lit). Photojournalism, poetry and music have become instruments of resistance and expression in the recent years (IANS, 2015; Kanjwal, Bhat, & Zahra, 2018). What is, however,

consistent across mediums is a common narrative of pain, violence, anger and helplessness that is symbolic of the Kashmiri youth identity today.

This book focusses on Kashmiri youth for several significant reasons. First, psychological literature supports the developmental process of learning about war and conflict, wherein experiences of early childhood and adolescence shape adult understanding and perceptions (Oppenheimer, Bar-Tal, & Raviv, 1999). Growing up in conflict creates specific environmental cues that shape cognitive processes of thinking, perception and meaning making and influence how individuals respond to their violent environments ideas are thereafter shared and become collective beliefs about the nature of conflict, the out-group and the oppressor, one's own group, the group's history and collective suffering. As mentioned before, this *collective ethos of conflict* can be exceptionally rigid and resistant to change. On these lines, it can be assumed that the early experiences of the youth of Kashmir today are unique and distinct from those of other generations who did not have a similar environment while growing up. How these interactions with the *socio-cultural context* have been internalized and then shared as group beliefs, norms and identities that shape the youth's attitudes and behaviour is an important step in the social psychological understanding of conflict and human behaviour. Second, the youth continue to be leading parties to the recent incidents of conflict and are essential actors in the movement for self-determination. They are probably the most important agents of ideological propaganda, social mobilization as well as peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the Kashmiri society today (Chadha, 2012; Dar, 2014). Therefore it is of utmost importance to engage with a deeper understanding of how experiences of violence could be influencing their emotions and behaviour.

Oppenheimer, Bar-Tal and Raviv (1999) discuss how children and adolescents co-construct their socio-cultural realities, that is, that every individual interacts and internalizes information from the external environment in different ways, creating their own set of ideas and values, which are then shared with the group. This aspect of the personal-environmental interaction calls for a deeper look at individually oriented variables, like mindset, that may be playing a substantial role in shaping thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Significantly large numbers of people living in areas vulnerable to conflict are exposed, directly or indirectly, to violence on a regular basis. However, only certain sections within such populations become actively involved in armed violence or nonviolent movements. In the context of Kashmir, the local population of the Valley has been exposed to different forms of violence for more than three decades. Irrespective of that, large sections of the population remained outside the armed militancy in the 1990s and continue to remain on the periphery of the more recent movements and protests. Some claim that joining the rebellion was viewed as honourable by young men who were hailed as martyrs and freedom fighters.

As popular as the movement was, it did not involve a considerable section of young men and women. In recent times, there have been large divides within the Kashmiri population over the purpose, direction, motivation and involvement in the self-determination movement. Even though a dominant, all-inclusive narrative seems to drive the majority of the youth in their political beliefs and ideas about identity and its assertion (Majumdar, 2012), there are many questions being raised about the differences within the Kashmiri society. This reiterates a seemingly paradoxical element in the narratives found among youth across conflict ridden societies, who are often caught within complex identity-related conflicts that merge within the master narrative of group-based violence and oppression (Barber, 2010; Jones, 2002). In the narratives collected by these authors, it is seen that while youth in conflict affected areas usually adhere to a larger collective identity, which is derived from the land, religion or ethnicity as well as the history of the conflict, they also develop individualistic ways of understanding and relating to these identities. These individual stories are drawn from their own beliefs, choices and life courses, and add on to the master narrative of a community. Hammack (2010) believes that youth process collective experiences and group-based beliefs or emotions through their own meaning making systems, thus creating narratives that are similar yet distinct. Yet ideological conformity to the larger political narrative in protracted conflicts is usually very strong, and hence significant sections of the youth participate, accept and sometimes endorse the use of violence towards a de-legitimized out-group that is perceived to be dangerous for the in-group's existence.

Over the years, the youth in Kashmir have been associated with fundamentalism, militancy and extremism. Sonpar (2008) gives an approximate estimate of about 30,000 ex-militants in Kashmir at the time of the study, with a majority of them having been involved in the movement by the age of 19 years. She reports,

> The consciousness of social identity that is, of being Kashmiri and Muslim was intensified in response to perceived threat and victimization. The youth of the respondents when they joined the militancy (more than half were below 19 years of age) made developmental issues around identity, ego ideals and autonomy psychologically salient. These resonated with the collective socio-political issues that engaged Kashmiri society.
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> (p. 148)

Thus a seemingly paradoxical image of youth in Kashmir remains to be explored, where, on the one hand, there has been a sustained engagement with various forms of active and often violent resistance, but, on the other hand, many have denounced violence and chosen protests and other forms

of mobilization. There are also those who have remained outside mainstream political involvement, choosing instead to voice their opinions through art or provide assistance and care to a community severely damaged by conflict. These individual differences have emerged in the background of a common and collective insecurity, fear of violence and loss of freedom. The existing collective narrative of violence, and the historical and political complexities that merge with ideology and identity adopted by the youth in Kashmir, gives them a unique and essential nature that the book hopes to explore through the assessment of cognitive, affective and behavioural attributes that are associated with their experiences of violence.

Research on exposure to violence in Kashmir

Social psychological work in the Kashmir Valley has been notably limited. At the time of my fieldwork in Kashmir, I was struggling to find literature on the themes that I was working on. Unfortunately there were very few studies, mostly clinical work, that reported the extent of psychological distress and PTSD among the victims of violence in Kashmir. Over the years and more so recently, engaged research and scholarship has emerged, mainly from Kashmiri researchers and psychologists who have been working with the community. Below I discuss some of the important reports that give a more comprehensive picture of the psychosocial difficulties faced by this community and the consequences of their exposure to repeated violence.

Naqshbandi, Sehgal and Hassan (2012), in their research on orphanages in Kashmir, report that a large number of children in Kashmir have lost their parents to conflict related violence in the Valley. There was a high level of PTSD, and a significant number of the participants reported that institutionalization had made it difficult for them to adjust to conventional life outside the orphanage. De Jong and colleagues (2008) conducted a two-stage cluster household survey to assess the psychosocial impact of exposure to violence resulting from conflict. A large number of respondents reported experiencing direct episodes of violence like raids and torture. The second survey revealed that approximately one-third of the respondents showed symptoms of psychological distress and had suicidal tendencies. Distress was found to be higher among women. Also, psychological distress was closely associated with direct experience of violence, like violation of modesty and physical disability. Margoob and Ahmad (2006) did an extensive survey on the "community prevalence of PTSD among adult Kashmiris" and have corroborated their findings with observations from psychiatric outpatient experiences. Results revealed a lifetime prevalence rate of 15.19%, which was comparable across gender. The authors report that a situation of 'mass traumatization' was prevalent in Kashmir, where, according to their data, approximately 75% of men and women have experienced incidents of collective trauma, like witnessing explosions, and 54% of adult males and

32% of adult females had direct encounters with violent episodes, like being threatened, attacked or beaten. Among the important findings of this study are the responses pertaining to coping mechanisms after violence exposure. Almost 60% of the participants who had been exposed to violence turned to religion for comfort, while 2% reported exhibiting aggression. Although the study does not elaborate on the forms of aggressive behaviour that the respondents employed to cope with the trauma of violence exposure, it is nonetheless important as a possible coping mechanism that may perpetuate further violence. Also, at the same time, the low prevalence rate of 2% indicates that aggressive coping strategies may be rare, and people in Kashmir could be looking at more positive resources (derived from religious sources or otherwise) to cope with the effects of trauma exposure. The authors highlight a significant finding from their data, relating to the comparable rates of PTSD among men and women, to emphasize that unlike many studies that have found PTSD rates among women to be significantly higher than those in men, across samples and forms of violence (Tolin & Foa, 2006), the 'mass traumatization' in Kashmir has created a condition where, irrespective of the fact that men seem to be more exposed to direct forms of violence (54% as opposed to 32% among women), the consequences of exposure leading to traumatic symptomology may not differ much between the genders. Amin and Khan (2009) found contradictory results with respect to gender differences in rates of depression among a Kashmiri sample. The overall prevalence of depressive symptoms was quite high (55.72%), with the highest being among young Kashmiris (67% between 15 and 25 years), which was also the age group where gender differences in prevalence rate were the least. In all other age ranges, women were significantly more depressed than their male counterparts, except for in rural settings, where the overall prevalence rate was also much higher (84% as opposed to 15% in urban areas). Though the study did not explore the relationship between this high incidence of depressive symptoms and violence exposure, the authors claim, based on their own experience of working with Kashmiri patients and previous literature, and without discounting the possibility of daily life events contributing to depression, that "the increase of depressive disorders is primarily due to continuing conflict" (p. 220).

Bhat and Ashraf (2016) undertook a detailed analysis of the effects of conflict on the youth in Kashmir. They found that an overwhelming number of respondents, who were young boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 35 years, expressed a deep anxiety, insecurity and uncertainty about living in Kashmir. Their levels of exposure to different forms of violence was significantly high, with "more than 89% reporting having witnessed crackdowns, more than 93% had been checked and frisked, 61% had witnessed cross firing and as many as 47% had witnessed explosions" (p. 117). The study captured a broader spectrum of psychosocial difficulties by including feelings of distress, helplessness, fear of losing a

loved one, fear of the outbreak of violence and extreme social alienation reported by the respondents. The study also revealed that youth who had been exposed to violent events were experiencing related health distortions, like loss of sleep, loss of interest, aggressive behaviour and suicidal thoughts. Sudan (2007), in association with the Jammu and Kashmir Child Rights and Research Trust, collected extensive data from youth enrolled in universities in Jammu and Kashmir as well the Hindu Kashmiri migrants living in Jammu. In-depth interviews and focussed group discussions revealed that along with a fear of violence and anxiety related to future opportunities, the youth were rejecting violence and becoming increasingly open to peace initiatives. Surveys on youth perception of the armed conflict and peace movements have shown that the youth in Kashmir are significantly inclined towards positive peace initiatives and show a decreasing faith in and disconnection from the armed movement Chadha (2012) highlights that 75% of the youth chose peaceful protests as their preferred means of voicing grievances, and almost an equal number rejected the use of violence. Kashmiri youth have indicated a consistent trend towards a hopeful and positive future (Jan & Manzoor, 2017) and exhaustion with the endless cycle of violence (Kashani, Kanth, & Fazili, 2003). This is in sharp contrast to the image of 'militants', 'extremists' and 'violent stone pelters' that have often been attached to the youth in the Valley. Chadha believes that this is a reflection of the disillusionment with violence and the mode of politics and resistance that the youth had employed in the previous decade. Yet, as Bhat (2018) notes, there is an omnipresent political will that drives the movement for self-determination and has become reminiscent of youth politics in the region. The youth of today's Kashmir, not unlike those of other regions affected by long-term violence, have a complicated and difficult emotional and behavioural footprint, one that has multiple ideological affiliations; misrepresentations from the lack of a sustained engagement with their needs and motivations; and, most importantly, an identity largely shaped by the memory and experience of violence.

Collective violence, psychosocial consequences and the role of mindset: scope and method of the present study

To begin with, the research experience and insight that guides most of this book was intended to add to the literature on Kashmir as there has generally been very limited social psychological work in this setting. Overall, research on the psychosocial consequences of the conflict in Kashmir has had a narrow focus on immediate experiences of violence while not adequately looking at the impact of collective events. There has not been any detailed enquiry into the effects of witnessing violence and whether indirect forms of violence exposure have different or stronger effects on emotional and behavioural outcomes like hope and aggression. Moreover, individual

differences that arise out of personal adherence to cultural and social norms and beliefs, mindsets, attitudes and attributions that may moderate or mediate the relationship between exposure to violence and consequent variables have not been explored sufficiently.

A non-PTSD approach towards the exploration of violence and its interaction with individual cognitive and affective variables would broaden the general perception, understanding and information about life in the Valley. More specifically, the research aimed at evaluating how types and extent of exposure to violence, which has had interesting manifestations in other settings, affects individual emotions in the unique cultural context of Kashmir. For instance, while a number of studies on exposure to political violence found the dominant effect of direct exposure to violence, a significant number of findings suggest the equally important role of witnessing violence and collective experiences. Is this difference cultural? Does it manifest more in certain societies than in others? Kashmiri society has many close-knit networks, be they in the form of extended family, religious solidarity or the overarching identity of belonging to Kashmir, and it would be interesting to examine how collective exposure to violence would affect individuals. On the other hand, because of the varied and extreme forms of violence that the population has been exposed to over the last two decades, personal accounts are frequent and may have a more direct association with the outcome variables. With the growing emphasis on cultural models of conflict and conflict resolution, examining psychological elements that are reportedly important in other contexts of conflict can be an essential step towards a sociocultural understanding of the violence in Kashmir. Additionally the study also looked at demographic differences in exposure to violence and whether any of the categorical differences (gender, age, region) would influence emotional outcomes among the youth.

Because of the lack of psychological literature on violence and consequent interactions with aspects of behaviour, the study included aggression as one of the main outcome variables. Since much has been found on the relationship between violence and aggression (Punamaki, 2009; Taylor, 2013) it was seen as an important relationship to explore in the specific sociocultural space of Kashmir, with its unique political landscape. This would also add to the sparse body of work on types of collective exposure to violence and the interaction between witnessing violence and aggression in an environment of ongoing conflict. Second, this study looked at variables of hope and optimism, and tested their relationship with forms and extent of exposure to violence. Compared to the quantity of research on violence and mental health, distress, aggressive behaviour and coping, the role and scope of hope and optimism in a context of conflict is much less explored. Hence this would add to the growing body of work on resilience and optimism among populations engulfed in violence. Understanding the opportunities for intervention based on a hope and optimism model has not

been addressed in the context of Kashmir so far. As has been reported in various accounts of conflict and post-conflict work, hope is seen as an essential requirement for the development of a sense of healing and recovery after violence. Pearlman (2013) points out that the dimensions of respect, connection and information, when mobilized in a community affected by violence, can foster hope, which is necessary to recreate a sense of identity and spirit. Similarly how individuals regulate, express or suppress emotions with reference to a threatening and violent environment is a relatively new area of enquiry. Emotion regulation processes are reported to be both a person-situation interaction (Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004) as well as culturally influenced (Butler, Lee, & Gross, 2007). By adding this variable to the model for the current study, the aim was to further the knowledge regarding emotion regulation in the context of intergroup conflict and explore more nuanced spaces of interaction with situation and culture: for instance how processes of regulation may be predicted by the nature and extent of violence.

Lastly, in including dimensions of mindset, the idea was to extend present theorization on individual beliefs and attitudes that gravely influence how violence and its experience may interact with personal emotions. These internal factors combine moral, cognitive and cultural meaning systems or mindsets and are manifested in attitudes towards violence, beliefs about the world and more philosophical understandings about heaven and religion. The assessment of the role of these attitudes within a broader framework of exposure to violence and emotional outcomes would bring us closer to a more holistic approach to psychosocial intervention in conflict, outside a dominant framework of trauma intervention. The cycle of violence that proceeds from experience to internalization to pro-violent mindset and consequent behaviour is a dangerous outcome of conflict that renders youth more susceptible to violence, and it is this situation that has to be addressed through intervention. Therefore, going further, the book investigates the effect of exposure to violence and the moderating effect of mindset on aggression, emotion regulation, hope and optimism among the youth in the Kashmir Valley. Based on the literature review, the identified gaps in research and the theoretical backdrop discussed in the second chapter, the following were the main objectives:

  i To understand if and how direct and collective exposure to violence predicts aggression, emotion regulation, hope and optimism among the youth in Kashmir.
 ii To examine the predictive relationship between the nature of exposure to violence and outcome variables, when controlling for socio-demographic variables.
iii To examine which type of violence exposure, that is, violence directed at the person or witnessing violence on family, friends or in the

community, is associated with aspects of aggression, emotion regulation, hope and optimism.

iv   To examine whether dimensions of an extremist mindset, namely, support for violence, the idea of a vile world and belief in divine power, moderate the effect of exposure to violence on aggression, emotion regulation, hope and optimism among the youth in Kashmir.

Design, participants and method

The research that informs the following chapters of the book was conceptualized, conducted and interpreted over a period of about four years between 2011 and 2015. It was a non-experimental, cross-sectional, field-based study with university students in and around Srinagar, who responded to a comprehensive multi-measure survey questionnaire. As the objective was to understand the consequences of exposure to violence, resulting from the ongoing conflict in Kashmir, a field-based data collection method was preferred. The purpose was explanatory, that is, to explain the interrelationships between the variables in the study. As Babbie (2011) points out, though the emphasis of exploratory and explanatory studies differ, in reality, research may combine elements of both these approaches. This study was also exploratory in certain ways: for instance, the theoretical derivatives and assumptions discussed before had not been examined in the context of Kashmir previously. Thus, even though the actual analysis is explanatory, the study had a few exploratory characteristics as well.

Data for the study was cross-sectional and quantitative. "A cross-sectional study involves observations of a sample, or cross section, of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time" (Babbie, 2011, p. 110). Data was collected through a survey that comprised standardized psychometric tests measuring the different variables in the study. Surveys provide useful information about attitudes, opinions and characteristics of a selected sample, which is assumed to be representative of the larger population (Babbie, 2011; Creswell, 2003). A survey method was chosen for the present study, keeping in mind the multiple variables that were to be measured and the access to the selected population that was available. Because the study was largely quantitative and aimed at assessing behavioural characteristics, opinions and attitudes towards certain statements, as well as the reporting of actual incidents, the survey technique was chosen as the appropriate method. The focus here was on the youth of Kashmir (for reasons that were mentioned above) and how their experiences of violence are related to aspects of behaviour.

After going through the available literature, I consulted subject matter experts to get a preliminary understanding of the context and the appropriateness of the measures I was looking at. Thereafter, with the help of local Kashmiri friends and colleagues, I conducted a pilot study to check

if the measures (tools/scales) worked in this particular context. Additionally, given the quantitate nature of the study, it was important that the measures had a minimum level of reliability. Over a month, 58 students, 39 males and 19 females from Kashmir University self-reported on a comprehensive questionnaire containing all the included sets of questions and scales. The respondents were cooperative and mostly attentive and honest in their responses. Preliminary statistical analysis showed that most of the scale items included were reliable with a Cronbach's alpha score of .70 and above. Only the items under divine power in the extremist mindset scale showed a below acceptable score for reliability. Principal component analysis with oblique rotation was done to determine if the items were falling within the relevant factors. Based on the results two items were removed from the divine power scale, which then made the scale moderately reliable (Cronbach's alpha of .56). The difficulties with this particular sub-scale were indicative of a larger conceptual issue, which I have tried to address in Chapter 6. Based on the findings from the pilot study, the next round of data collection was conducted in the month of September 2012 across two university campuses in and around Srinagar, the capital city of the Kashmir Valley. As the student population in the universities was diverse in terms of their socio-economic background and regional demographics, the study was restricted to Srinagar and nearby areas.

Ninety male and 70 female students enrolled in different courses at the Kashmir University, Srinagar campus, and the Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, Pulwama, participated in the study. The age range of the participants was initially set at 18 to 25 years, which represents young or emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). However, many participants themselves suggested that the youth in Kashmir who grew up during the armed conflict (if taken as an overarching category) and were now seen as participating in protests spanned a wider age range, including young adults of 25 to 30 years. There are a few reasons for this—first, with the ongoing conflict, economic opportunities have stagnated in the Valley, resulting in young men and women being of an employable age but not having access to jobs. This, combined with the fact that Kashmiri culture is usually encouraging of higher education, leads men and women of an older age (25 to 30 years) to enrol themselves in post-graduate and other advanced courses wherever possible. Many of these older students were found to be actively involved in the political and social transformations happening within the Kashmiri society at the time of my fieldwork. Therefore young adults up to the age of 30 years were included in the sample to account for a more representative picture of youth's experiences with past and ongoing violence.

Kashmir University is the most accessible and largest university campus in Kashmir, with students from all across the state coming for higher studies. Also, Kashmir University offers a large number of post-graduate and doctoral courses and therefore has many older students who are enrolled in

regular courses or work as research scholars. Lastly, because this campus is located in the heart of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir Valley, it was also the most convenient and plausible location for the researcher to travel and conduct the study. Islamic University of Science and Technology is a smaller university but has a wide range of science as well as social science courses and is close to Srinagar.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling. I began by approaching university students with the help of a local student, who voluntarily agreed to assist in the recruitment process. This was done informally by initiating a conversation and interacting with students on the campus. Thereafter, different departments were contacted, and students were recruited from the classrooms within a department on the basis of availability and willingness to participate after signing an informed consent form. At every step of the data collection, caution was taken to maintain the ethical integrity of the research. Special attention was paid to explaining the possibly intrusive and distressing nature of some of the questions, and the participants were assured about the confidentiality of their opinions, considering the politically controversial topic. Participants could withdraw at any point during the process or not respond to any specific item that was particularly distressing.

The majority of the participants (92.5%) were between the ages of 18 to 25 years, with the mean age of the sample being 22 years. In total, 56.2% of the sample were men, and the rest of the 44% were women. Most of the participants were pursuing higher studies, with 59.4% having completed their graduate degrees. The socio-economic background of the participants was measured by the reported average annual family income, according to which the majority were in the lower middle income group (42.5%), followed by higher middle income (39%) and about 10% each in the lower and higher income groups. The majority of the participants were from Srinagar, but there was relatively similar representation from most of the other districts of Kashmir Valley, like Baramulla, Kulgam, Anantnag and Shopian. This meant that regions which had been reported to experience significant amounts of violence (Baramulla, Kulgam, Anantnag) and were more rural than Srinagar were also represented in the sample.

The data was cleaned and checked for missing values and outliers. Since the percentage of missing values was very low (less than 3%), they were replaced by the mean value for the variables, and no data transformations were required (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2013). Given that the data was continuous and keeping in mind the objectives of the research, correlational analysis through multiple regression was selected as the appropriate method. Statistical analysis was done using the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences, or more commonly referred to as SPSS version 21. The analysis of the responses was done in three steps for each of the outcome variables. This included testing the relationship between direct and
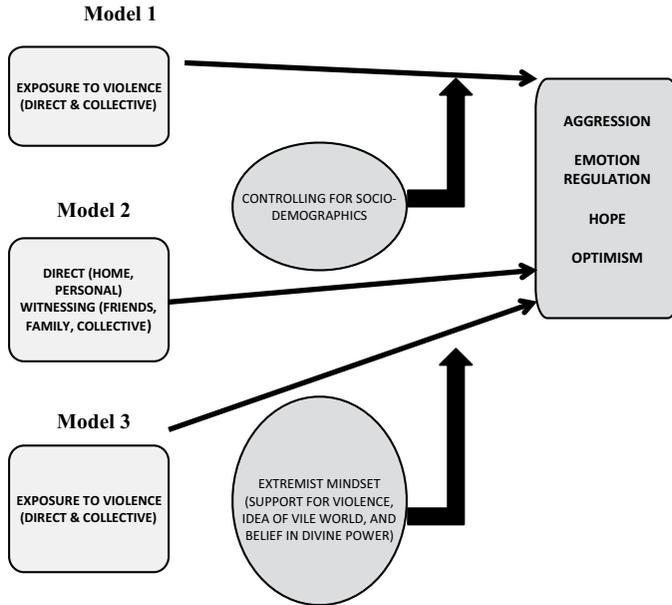
Model 1

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE (DIRECT & COLLECTIVE)

CONTROLLING FOR SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

AGGRESSION

EMOTION REGULATION

HOPE

OPTIMISM

Model 2

DIRECT (HOME, PERSONAL) WITNESSING (FRIENDS, FAMILY, COLLECTIVE)

Model 3

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE (DIRECT & COLLECTIVE)

EXTREMIST MINDSET (SUPPORT FOR VIOLENCE, IDEA OF VILE WORLD, AND BELIEF IN DIVINE POWER)

Figure 3.1 Models for regression analysis.
Source: Author.

collective exposure to violence and outcome variables, followed by testing the strength of individual sub-categories of exposure to violence and finally by testing the moderating effect of three dimensions of the extremist mindset. The regression model was set up with relevant socio-demographic variables, direct and collective exposure to violence as the predictors and each of the outcome variables in the study. Moderation analysis was done using PROCESS Macro, which is a specialized tool for conducting moderation and mediation analysis (Hayes, 2013) (Figure 3.1).

There were certain limitations to the method; the sample size was considerably small, keeping in mind the number of variables in the study, which prevented the use of advanced statistics and path models. A larger sample could not be included because of time limitations and intermediate incidents of unrest that broke out during the period of data collection in Kashmir. Second, even though Kashmir University in Srinagar is the biggest campus in the Valley and has a large number of students from various districts, the sample had an overrepresentation of people from Srinagar. Also, the sampling technique was purposive, combining convenience and snowball methods. A more random sampling technique could yield better statistical effects but was difficult to execute, given the resource constraints.

Violent events experienced by Kashmiri youth

The findings revealed a notably high degree of exposure to violent events among the participants of the study. As has been recorded by previous studies, witnessing a range of violent behaviour was common in the Valley. The majority of the participants had witnessed shootings (72.7%), explosions (70%) and friends and neighbours (76.4%) and strangers (74.5%) being beaten up or injured. More than 40% of them had had a family member who had been arrested or detained and a friend or neighbour who had been killed in the violence.

Experiences of direct violence were comparatively less but still significant. Many of the participants reported that their houses had been searched (87.6%), which was common during the 1990s period of militancy, when the military checked civilian houses for hidden ammunition or clues regarding the insurgents. Many of the participants had been stopped, checked or harassed at a military or police checkpoint (70.2%). More than 60% reported being body searched and exposed to tear gas (Table 3.2).

While the reported incidents of sexual abuse (1.2%) and being stripped in public (11.2%) was very low when compared to the rest of the statements, the nature of these items and the cultural sensitivity attached to openly reporting sexual experiences, including misconduct, may have prevented participants from reporting these incidents accurately. There was a

Table 3.1 Nature and type of collective exposure to violence reported by sample (N = 160)

Type of exposure	Nature of event	Frequency	%	Extent of exposure (based on average no. of times)
Witnessed collective violence	Shooting	117	72.7	3
	Shelling or explosions	114	70.8	3
	Strangers humiliated	112	69.6	3
	Strangers injured or beaten up	120	**74.5**	3
Witnessed violence against family	Humiliated	86	53.4	3
	Beaten up or injured	95	59.0	2
	Witnessed family member detained	68	42.2	3
	Killed	28	17.4	2
Witnessed violence against friends or neighbours	Humiliated	116	72	3
	Beaten up or injured	123	**76.4**	3
	Detained	113	70.2	3
	Killed	72	44.7	3

Source: Author.

Table 3.2 Nature and type of direct exposure to violence reported by sample
(N = 160)

Type of exposure	Violent event	N	%	Extent of exposure (based on average no. of times)
Residence	House searched	141	**87.6**	3
	House occupied	37	23	3
	House shot at	40	24.8	2
Direct personal exposure	Beaten	55	34.2	2
	Exposed to tear gas	98	**60.9**	3
	Exposed to sound bombs	82	50.9	3
	Body searched	111	**68.9**	More than 3
	Shot at	28	17.4	2
	Detained or arrested	24	14.9	3
	Humiliated (physically manhandled/cursed)	76	47.2	3
	Checked or harassed at checkpoint	113	**70.2**	3
	Interrogated	35	21.7	3
	Harassed during curfew/ street protest or mob	69	42.9	3

Source: Author.

high correlation between the direct and collective exposure scales (r = .610, p < .01) as well as between some of the sub-scales. This indicates that individuals who had been exposed to one form of violence were also more likely to have experienced other incidents. Both direct and collective exposure to violence was significantly correlated with gender (direct = –.477, p < .01 and collective = –.351, p < .01), indicating that men were more exposed to both forms of violence than women.

Among the socio-demographic variables gender had a significant negative correlation with physical aggression (r = –.256, p < .01) and a positive correlation with cognitive reappraisal (r = .177, p < .05). Age was positively correlated with social relations and personal value (r = .227, p < .01), and annual family income was significantly and positively correlated with positive future orientation (r = .189, p < .05). A set of t tests were run to confirm the role of socio-demographic variables, which showed that only gender had a significant effect (t = 3.330, p < .05), where men and women had a mean difference of .37 with respect to physical aggression and (t = –2.340, p < .05) a mean difference of –.47 with respect to cognitive reappraisal. Therefore male participants in the present sample reported a significantly higher degree of physical aggression than female participants, while women reported the use of reappraisal strategies for emotion regulation significantly more than men. Steiner, Cook, Shadish and Clark (2010) suggest

that only those variables, which seem to be correlated with the treatment variable (or independent variable in this case) as well as the outcome variable, should be considered as covariates in a study. As gender was the only socio-demographic variable that was significantly associated with both direct and collective exposure to violence, as well as a few of the outcome variables, it was selected as a control variable for further analysis. Men and women had obvious differences in their experience of violence and have been found to differ on measures of aggression, emotion regulation, hope and optimism. This was the first indication towards a gendered understanding of exposure to violence that was developing through the data. To explore this further and account for its effect in the statistical models, gender was included as a covariate in the multiple regression analysis (discussed in the following chapters).

The table below presents the mean and deviation scores for all the other measured variables (Table 3.3).

From the table below we see that the mean score of positive future orientation was the highest (m = 4.42), followed by social relations and personal value (m = 3.92) and optimism (m = 3.60). Physical aggression had the lowest mean score (m = 2.42), while verbal aggression was more common among the participants. The majority of the participants used both forms of emotion regulation to a certain degree (m = 4.90, m = 4.54), but the higher deviation scores (s = 1.28 and s = 1.42) suggest individual differences in how and when regulation techniques were employed. As for the three dimensions of extremist mindset, belief in divine power had the highest mean score (m = 3.90) followed by idea of a vile world (3.90). Support for

Table 3.3 Mean, range and standard deviation of outcome and moderator variables (N = 160)

Measured variables		Mean	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
Aggression	Physical aggression	2.42	.71	1.00	4.56
	Verbal aggression	3.23	.79	1.00	5.00
	Hostility	2.98	.73	1.00	5.00
	Anger	2.81	.79	1.00	5.00
Emotion regulation	Cognitive reappraisal	4.90	1.28	1.00	7.00
	Expressive suppression	4.54	1.42	1.00	7.00
Hope	Trust and confidence	4.27	.54	1.44	5.00
	Interest and perspective	2.99	.78	1.00	5.00
	Positive future orientation	4.43	.56	2.00	5.00
	Social relations and personal value	3.93	.82	1.00	5.00
Optimism		3.60	.50	2.00	4.90
Extremist mindset	Support for violence	2.06	.79	1.00	4.00
	Belief in divine power	3.90	.58	2.38	5.00
	Idea of a vile world	3.90	.89	1.17	5.00

Source: Author.

violence had a relatively low mean (m = 2.06), showing that most of the participants were not supportive of violence in general.

Therefore the findings highlight that on the whole Kashmiri youth are more hopeful and positive about their futures vis-a-vis their beliefs in extremist thought or action. However to understand how their experiences with violence and living in a violent environment could be related to these psychological outcomes, further analysis was required, which will be discussed hereinafter. The following chapters present each of the measured variables (outcome variables), their significance in the social psychological understanding of violent conflict and the findings from the regression and interaction/ moderation analysis with exposure to violence and dimensions of extremist thought.

Summary

This chapter presented the context and background of the research by discussing the history, nature and developments in the Kashmir conflict. Thereafter we moved on to discussing the role of youth in conflict, specifically why they hold an important position in the conflict that has ensued in the Kashmir Valley. Through this, the rationale for the study that informs the book is presented, and its main objectives are outlined. After a brief method section that gives details on the research design, sampling and analysis techniques, major descriptive and preliminary findings are presented before moving on to in-depth discussion on the associations between ETV and the emotional and behavioural outcome variables that were measured through the study.

4

VIOLENCE, EMOTIONS AND THEIR REGULATION

Human emotions are fundamental psychological functions that are generated by the interaction between evolution and genetics, individual personality and temperament, and social learning and cultural norms. Psychological examinations into the nature and process of emotions emerged rather late given that emotions have always been an observably significant motivator of human behaviour. Irrespective of the varying and often divided opinions on the fundamental role of emotions (while some believe that emotions are constant and important motivators of behaviour, others believe that they are transient, temporary and distinct from cognitive functions, with the latter being more important in understanding behaviour and action), it is now widely believed that emotions play a very significant role in determining behaviour and course of action (Izard, 1991). Jasper (1998) described two aspects of the emotion spectrum—affect, which is more ingrained and long-term, and temporal reactive emotions, which are reactions to some form of cognitive appraisal. Hence sentiments like love and attachment are affect states, whereas the feeling of pain or sadness at the loss of a loved one accompanies the cognitive response to a situation. According to Thoits (1990) an emotion has four interconnected components: (1) situational cues, (2) physiological changes, (3) expressive gestures and (4) an emotion label that gives a name to the specific configuration of components. For example, the emotions of disgust, anger and compassion are elicited by specific situational cues and have distinct physiological changes and manifestations in the form of facial and bodily reactions accompanying the emotions. Whenever there is a situational cue or arousal there are physiological changes that indicate the form of reaction or expression towards that situation. This reaction is then labelled as a certain emotion, which depends on information processing, cultural understanding and biological predispositions. This is the reason why a common external situation, say, for instance, a bad grade on a test, can make someone angry and make someone else feel dejected or humiliated, anxious or afraid. Emotions are complex psychological constructs that are influenced by hardwired biological predispositions as well as malleable social and cultural conditions. Since emotions are changeable

and highly affected by situational cues, they hold an essential place in understanding how individuals process and respond to violent environments. Conflict and violence produce strong emotional responses that are closely connected to motivation, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.

Irrespective of its crucial nature, there was a limited focus on emotions in understanding group behaviour until recently. Its abstractness and seemingly 'irrational' or 'unreasonable' nature made the study of emotions irrelevant in international politics. Additionally, emotions were seen as an individual phenomenon; feelings, sentiments and moods, all of which are associated with the larger concept of an emotional state, remained the focus of individualistic psychological theorization for a long time. Research and writing on emotions was intended to explore an individual's behaviour and motivation, and how cognitive processes affected individual decision-making through the appraisal of particular emotional states. There was increasing interest in the shared effects of cognitive processes like thoughts, attitudes and beliefs, with a large body of literature attending to the effects of social information processing, social constructivism and shared memory, while shared emotional states were relatively underexplored (Barsade, 2002).

Over time the focus on the intra-psychic effects of emotions has expanded with the realization that emotions have an essential role in interpersonal and intergroup behaviour. At the interpersonal level emotions and their expression can convey meaningful messages and help in maintaining social relationships. They are also instrumental in eliciting reciprocal emotions from others as well as in deterring undesirable reactions. Beyond the dyadic interpersonal level, emotions play an important role in group and cultural associations. Emotions help individuals to identify with other groups members, define group boundaries and negotiate their roles in the group as well as in group related problems. Culturally, emotions are shared based on a common historical and socio-economic status, and help in defining group norms, values and identities (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Thus, just as emotions are essential components of individual behaviour, they are important psychological functions of a collective. Barsade (2002) and others have spoken about the effects of 'emotional contagion'—a process wherein group members consciously and subconsciously come to share and exhibit common emotions. The shared-ness of emotions and the capacity for collective emotions to drive group behaviour make examining emotional reactions to political violence a necessity.

Political violence and emotions

As discussed, the emphasis on emotions and their role in political behaviour is relatively recent. Not only has the importance of emotions been neglected and often denied when it comes to mainstream political behaviour, for

instance, electoral decision making (Manning, 2017), it remains largely understudied when it comes to peace and conflict. There are several reasons for this—first feminist scholarship has highlighted the dichotomous separation of reason/emotion, man/woman, politics/nature that has come to represent social life. The realm of politics, and thereby political decision-making, conflict and dispute settlement, has been dominated by men and ideas around realism and rationality (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2012). Emotions, usually attributed to women, consequently have been delegated to private feminine affairs, mostly within the interpersonal sphere. Emotionality only seems to have become a relevant topic within politics when describing seemingly irrational or inexplicable behaviour—for instance mob behaviour, riots or religious fundamentalism, and related self-harm (suicide bombing). Thus mainstream political theorization did not consider the exploration of emotional states and related outcomes as necessary when dealing with public political state affairs.

Second others have pointed out the dangers of mixing emotions and politics by referring to extreme political actions that are seen as an outcome of strong emotional ideologies. Advocates of this line of thought have warned against the mixing of politics and emotions, stating that emotions are easily manipulated by politicians and political leaders towards extremist reactions, as seen in fascist regimes. The emotional undertones of populist politics are exemplified as the danger of mixing emotions in the realm of politics. This assumption not only takes away agency from the individual actors but also presents reason as a binary opposite of emotion. Manning (2017) notes that this produces "assumptions that people are ignorant and confused, barely repressing their irrationality under mass produced conventional opinions" (p. 109). Lastly, another factor limiting interest and initiative towards the study of emotions was methodological constraints. The abstractness of emotions, their changeability and volatility made them difficult to approach from an objective, empirical standpoint.

Contemporary social psychologists have challenged these views to a large extent, showing that seemingly irrational behaviour, like that in a crowd, is in fact a meaningful social process wherein individuals are empowered by the sense of a collective identity (Reicher, 2011). Additionally, the assumed distinction between intelligent reasoning and emotional irrationality has been made irrelevant by findings from neuropsychological and cognitive psychology that show that "rationality is never empty of emotional input" (Baele, Sterck, & Meur, 2016, p. 720). These studies have reiterated that all actions and behaviour are influenced by emotional systems and cues, which are closely associated with cognitive processes. Contemporary work on intelligence has increasingly found evidence for a direct rather than an inverse relationship between emotions and cognitive functions like decision-making and creativity. Most importantly, social psychologists and

others have emphasized the interrelated influence of individual emotions and collective cultural systems. Ahall (2012), referring to Neta Crawford's work, explains that

> Emotions are inner states that individuals describe to others as feelings and, in this sense, subjective experiences. However, as feelings are experienced internally, the meaning attached to those feelings, the behaviors associated with them and the recognition of emotions in others, are cognitively and culturally constructed. Thus while most often experienced at the individual level, emotion is inherently social and relational and at the center of how communities are organized, function and communicate.
>
> (p. 172)

The emotionality of identity and identity assertion is well captured by Jasper (1998, p. 415), who enunciates that the "strength of an identity comes from its emotional side". Discussing the role of emotions in social movements and protest, the author talks about how participating in collective action can "be pleasurable in itself, irrespective of the goals and outcomes" because of the sentiment attached to the group identity. These emotions can be positive, such as pride and joy, as well as negative, like shame and guilt, which can drive protests to fight the stigmatization and salvage group honour. Collective emotions are those that are felt by group members because of their identification with a particular group, even when the situations eliciting these emotions are not personally experienced. Individuals, by identifying with a collective or by merely being a part of it, may experience emotions that are shared by some or a majority of the members of that group. These collective emotions can culminate into a sustained emotional climate when the provoking situation lasts over a long time. Bar-Tal, Halperin, and Rivera (2007) highlight the maintaining role of collective emotions by pointing out that

> Emotional context transmits salient cues and signals that evoke a particular emotion among society members. When such emotional context lasts for a period of time, society members who live in this context become attuned to the cues and signals. They become predisposed to channels of communication, including mass media, and the learning may be later generalized and automatized.
>
> (p. 446)

This emphasizes the need to focus on emotional climates that persist in difficult situations like conflict and how they can create psychological predispositions to specific ways of understanding and responding to the situation. An emotional climate of mistrust and fear can attune individuals to

perceive every action from outside the group as a threat and thereby disregard moves towards reconciliation, be suspicious of policies or retaliate with negative responses. Addressing these obstacles to conflict resolution, Lederach (1997), Nadler and Schnabel (2008), and others have called attention to the emotional determinants of reconciliation and peacebuilding. Their work looks at conflict resolution as a two-fold process, which includes addressing the political and economic grievances of victim groups as well as their psychological and emotional needs. For instance, Worchel and Coutant (2008) emphasize the need to address intergroup threats and hatred as a collective emotion towards the out-group in a conflict. According to the authors, reconciliation can be made possible only if fear and hostility is reduced by highlighting curiosity about the out-group and possibilities of coexistence without threat.

Since emotions as a legitimate factor that determines the socio-political behaviour of individuals and communities had a slow emergence into public thought, scholarly work and practice around conflict resolution and peacebuilding has also suffered from this myopic view of emotions. Unsurprisingly, policy and action-based discussions around conflict resolution in India and South Asia has largely ignored the aspect of emotional grievances, frustration, fear, humiliation, anger, hope and resilience that are omnipresent in communities exposed to political violence. Current trends direct us towards an immediate need to engage with emotional constituents in large-scale conflict, the management and regulation of these emotions and the consequences of emotional experiences.

Emotion regulation

Understanding the emotional consequences of conflict requires drawing attention to all aspects of the emotional process. This includes investigating types of emotions and how they are experienced as well the emotional process of arousal and expression. Do conditions of extreme threat and vulnerability impede or enhance the ability of individuals to deal with emotional stressors? Does exposure to violence (ETV) in any way affect the ability of individuals to deal with their emotional experiences, which, in turn, determine their behaviour? To answer this line of enquiry I turned towards the concept of emotion regulation and examined its relationship with ETV.

Emotion regulation is a relatively new area of research that focusses on how individuals manage and regulate the expression of emotions in different situations. It is an important element of enquiry because it not only shows how strategies of regulation can affect the emotional behaviour of individuals but also how these strategies can be modified towards a more constructive method of coping with negative emotion producing situations. Thompson (1994, p. 27) views emotion regulation as "consisting of the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating and modifying

emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals". Gross (1998) reiterates the same features of emotion regulation and emphasizes the capacity to influence the aspects of content, timing and expression. Cole, Michel, and Teti (1994, p. 76) state that the regulation of emotion is the "ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with a range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions". Emotion regulation is therefore a range of strategies that is used by individuals to moderate the experience and expression of an emotion. It depends on the situation that one is in as well as individual personality factors that determine how one regulates his or her emotions. Some view emotions and their regulation as one and same (Campos, Frankel, & Camras, 2004) in that the first represents the constitutional aspects, while the latter is the functional aspect. According to researchers feeling an emotion is usually always preceded and accompanied by the appraisal of a situation and the consequent emotional reaction to suit it.

Regulation of emotions is important in dealing effectively with and adapting to situations. while mis-regulation can often lead to inappropriate emotions that hinder the ability to cope adequately with stressors. Two common ways that individuals regulate their emotions are by suppressing them (usually negative) or by reappraising them, i.e. trying to think about the situation or the emotion in a different way, usually by changing a negative feeling to a positive one. These two strategies have distinct connections with positive and negative emotional outcomes, sometimes acting in an inverse relationship. Studies have confirmed that emotion regulation has implications for affective responding, social functioning and well-being (Gross & John, 2003). In a study with 416 Italian undergraduate students, Balzarotti, John, and Gross (2010) confirmed predicted associations of emotion regulation with affect, coping, social functioning and personality. Reappraisal was positively correlated with coping, positive affect, extraversion and impulse control, while emotional suppression was negatively correlated with coping. It is now generally accepted that reappraisal maybe a better regulation strategy than suppression. Suppression can mean that the strongly felt negative emotions are not dealt with, and they continue to fester and passively affect behaviour and action. On the other hand reappraisal is a more active and engaged way of dealing with strong emotions, and it requires addressing the situation and appraising personal and collective resources to reduce the effect of the stressor as much as possible. Supporting this assumption, Mitrofan and Ciuluvica (2012), in a study that measured anger, hostility, life satisfaction and emotion regulation among adolescents, found that reappraisal was negatively associated with anger and hostility, and that essential aspects within regulation, like impulse control, clarity in expressing emotions and acceptance of emotions, were instrumental in optimizing life satisfaction while reducing anger and hostility. This further highlights that regulation mechanisms are intertwined

with emotional experience and expressions wherein factors that obstruct regulation can produce negative affect states.

Unfortunately there is not a large body of existing work on emotion regulation from naturalistic or field settings, or specifically from contexts affected by violence. Most of the findings informing our theorization around regulation and reappraisal come from experimental work in laboratory settings, where cognitive manipulations are possible, and observable changes to emotional outcomes are recorded. However, given the obvious emotional nature of long-drawn conflicts it is no doubt a pressing question to examine in real-world contexts of intractable conflicts. The significant role of social context in the way emotions are felt, expressed and appraised has been widely acknowledged in research on emotions (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Rivera, 2007; Gross, 1998; Thompson, 1994). Thus regulation, appraisal, expression or suppression is closely associated with the nature of the external situation that an individual is part of. A physical environment of conflict produces various negative external cues, like experience of violence, lack of safety and curtailment of movement and freedom, all of which can cause intense emotional reactions. Dr Eran Halperin is one of the few researchers to have taken the conceptual ideas of emotion regulation outside a laboratory setting and into the context of violent conflict. Over the years Halperin, with other colleagues, has explored several regulation strategies among Israeli and Palestinian participants to conclude that contexts of conflict require innovative and specialized regulation interventions that can help survivors of violence process and cope with their experiences. In one of their earlier studies, Halperin and Gross (2011) found that reappraisal positively correlated with support for humanitarian aid, and this relationship was mediated by feelings of hope. The findings suggest that in a context of extreme negative experiences such as conflict, appraisal may work more effectively by promoting positive emotions (like hope) rather than reducing negative ones. Therefore appraising the violent situation through constructive regulation strategies can be related to positive attitudes towards peacebuilding among those who are hopeful for a better future. Findings like this encouraged more work on the role of emotion regulation, and a series of studies by the team revealed interesting results. For instance Halperin, Cohen-Chen, and Goldenberg (2014) found that instead of direct emotion regulation strategies that are effective in interpersonal interactions, contexts of intractable conflict, because of their complex and difficult nature, call for an indirect method of regulation and intervention, where group based negative emotions (hatred, lack of trust and anger) can be appraised into conciliatory positive emotions (trust and hope). These indirect methods include subtle messaging via mass media and other forums prior to a negative event, which can predispose an individual to deal with the negative emotion felt at the time of the event and thereby reduce its effect. This is particularly relevant in contexts of ongoing conflict, where decades of past

violence create strong biases and automatically ensure that new episodes of violence are encountered with a heightened sense of anger, fear and hostility. To break this cycle, the authors believe that, along with direct regulation strategies, indirect mechanisms could be useful.

To further this line of investigation the present research included emotion regulation as an outcome variable and tested its relationship with ETV. The intent here was to particularly delineate the role of collective ETV and assess if it significantly predicted emotion regulation when controlling for direct exposure and socio-demographic variables. In other words, the aim was to see if persistent and severe exposure to collective episodes of violence would significantly predict a reduction in the capacity to regulate emotions at an individual level. The relationship to collective violence, if found significant, would also point at the function of emotions in connection to group and collective forces as opposed to the more popular understanding of emotions as an individual outcome. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire by Gross and John (2003) was used to measure two strategies of regulation: namely, expressive suppression (I control my emotions by not expressing them) and cognitive reappraisal (when I want to feel less negative emotion, such as sadness or anger, I change what I'm thinking about reappraisal). The questionnaire consists of 10 statements that have to be rated on a 7 point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All statements are positively coded, with items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 10 covering reappraisal and 2, 4, 6, and 9 covering emotional suppression. The results revealed interesting associations and confirmed some expected and established correlations.

ETV and emotion regulation: findings

Both dimensions of emotion regulation were measured on a 7 point Likert scale. While 50% of the participants said that they used reappraisal techniques to deal with negative emotions, less than 40% used suppression. Thus the average for cognitive reappraisal (4.90) was slightly higher than emotional suppression (4.53). There was also substantial individual difference (s = 1.28 and s = 1.42) in the use of both the strategies when compared to the deviation scores for other outcome variables.

ETV and emotion regulation

The correlations revealed that cognitive reappraisal had a significant negative relationship with both direct and collective ETV (Table 4.1). It was also negatively related to most of the categories of ETV, with the relationship being the strongest with exposure to personal incidents of violence. Based on the bivariate correlations, only cognitive reappraisal was tested in a regression model to examine whether collective ETV predicted a decrease in this variable when controlling for gender and direct exposure (Table 4.2).

Table 4.1 Bivariate correlations between direct and collective ETV and emotion regulation (N = 160)

	Outcome variables	Direct exposure	Collective exposure
Emotion regulation	Reappraisal	$-.282^{**}$	$-.189^{*}$
	Suppression	$-.072$	$.045$

Home	Personal	Family	Collective violence	Friends
$-.179^{*}$	$-.259^{**}$	$-.158^{*}$	$-.141$	$-.185^{*}$

Note:
*p<0.05 ; **p< 0.01
*is significant 0.05 and **is significant at 0.01

Table 4.2 Direct and collective ETV, gender and cognitive reappraisal (N = 160)

Predictors	Beta	t- value	Significance level
Constant		18.365	.000
Gender	.056	.640	.523
Direct	−.245	−2.394	.018
Collective	−.034	−.359	.720

F = 5.062, p < .05, R^2 = .089, Adjusted R^2 = .071

Type of ETV and cognitive reappraisal (N = 160).

The regression model with cognitive reappraisal as outcome variable and direct and collective ETV as the main predictor variables, and with gender as the covariate, was significant, F (3,156) = 5.062, p < .05, and accounted for 7% of the variance in reappraisal. Direct ETV had a significant negative correlation with reappraisal (beta = −.245, p < .05), controlling for the other variables in the model. Therefore direct ETV significantly predicted cognitive reappraisal when controlling for gender and collective ETV. On further analysis the model with the sub-categories of direct and collective ETV to predict reappraisal was also significant, F (5,154) = 2.649, p < .05, accounting for 5% of the differences in the outcome variable (Table 4.3).

Direct personal ETV emerged as an individual significant predictor (beta = −.212, p < .05) of reappraisal when controlling for the other types of ETV. However, witnessing violence on family and collective violence seemed to be acting as suppressor variables in the model. Suppressor variables have negligible correlations with the outcome variables (cognitive reappraisal in this case) but strong correlations with the predictors. This can cause irregularities in the model and disturb the variance being accounted for. To remove this effect a second model was tested, with the two sub-categories of direct exposure and witnessing violence on friends (which was the category of collective exposure with the strongest correlation with reappraisal) (Table 4.4).

Table 4.3 Type of ETV and cognitive reappraisal (N = 160)

	Predictors	Beta	t- value	Significance level
Direct Exposure	Constant		22.835	.000
	Home	−.043	−.438	.686
	Personal	−.212	−2.132	.035
Collective Exposure	Family	.001	.011	.991
	Collective	.025	.236	.814
	Friends	−.094	−.858	.392

F = 2.649, p < .05, R^2 = .079, Adjusted R^2 = .049

Table 4.4 Type of ETV and cognitive reappraisal (Adjusted model, N = 160)

	Predictors	Beta	t- value	Significance level
Direct Exposure	Constant		25.542	.000
	Home	−.040	−.427	.670
Collective Exposure	Personal	−.208	−2.154	.033
	Friends	−.081	−.908	.365

F = 4.451, p < .01, R^2 = .079, Adjusted R^2 = .061

This was a better fit model that was significant, F (3,156) = 4.451, p < .01, and explained 6% of the variance in reappraisal. Direct personal ETV continued to be a significant predictor (beta = −.208, p < .05) over and above the contribution of direct ETV on one's home and witnessing violence on friends. Hence, an increase in direct personal experience with violence significantly predicted a reduced appraisal of emotions.

The findings regarding emotion regulation processes vis-a-vis ETV provide an added ground on which further theorizing and examination may happen. To begin with, cognitive reappraisal had a more significant correlation to ETV than suppression, supporting the conceptual framework proposed by Halperin and colleagues (2008) that highlighted appraisal as the most likely emotion regulation strategy that may be used in a context of intergroup conflict. For the present sample, direct ETV and direct personal experiences with violence both significantly predicted a decrease in cognitive reappraisal. This indicates that individuals who are exposed to direct forms of violence tend to indulge less in cognitive techniques that reduce the negative content of the situation and thereby reduce its negative emotional impact. The findings point at two important elements: first that the more one is exposed to conflict related violence, the less she or he is likely to use cognitive reappraisal as a strategy to deal with negative emotions, and second that this relationship is strongest for exposure to direct experiences of violence wherein the more an individual faces violence herself, the less likely she is to engage in constructive regulation of emotions.

Reappraisal has been found to be positively associated with affective elements of increased positive emotional experience and expression as well as less negative emotional experience and expression. Moreover it is associated with better memory, social support and connectedness (Gross, 2002). Hence a decrease in cognitive reappraisal implies a reduced capacity, ability or interest in dealing with negative affect-producing situations in an emotionally and socially adaptive way. Given that past research corroborates the association between reappraisal and well-being and positive coping, its negative association with ETV indicates that violence can have adverse implications for individual emotional functioning. Bar-Tal and colleagues (2007) point out that every social context has a synonymous emotional culture where certain emotions prevail and are dominant. Long-term exposure to a particular emotional context leads to the formation of automatic cues such that whenever an individual is faced with a similar situation, he or she responds with the prevalent repertoire of emotions. This means that with prolonged or repeated exposure to certain violent situations, an individual is predisposed to react with specific emotions that may be shared among the in-group members and therefore do not reappraise these situations with the aim of regulating their negative impact. This can lead to the experience and expression of more negative emotions, like anger and fear, that are common in these contexts, leading to the maintenance of conflict supporting emotions. Negative emotions in a context of conflict pile up to form long term negative sentiments, like hatred, guilt and shame, which dominate attitudes towards in-group and out-group members, and individual and group political attitudes about reconciliation and peace (Halperin, Bar-Tal, Nets-Zehngut, & Drori, 2008; Moore & Aweiss, 2002; Tam et al., 2007).

An important aspect of the current findings is that cognitive reappraisal was more closely related to an individual's direct experiences of violence than to the effects of collective exposure. Considering the importance of collective emotions in conditions of protracted conflict, it may be interesting to explore why direct experiences of violence are more significantly associated with how individuals regulate emotions. If reappraisal-based frameworks can indeed be applied in situations of ongoing conflict, and people can be trained to feel more positive emotions (Halperin & Gross, 2011), the differences in how direct and collective experiences of violence may affect individual tendencies to reappraise needs to be taken into account.

The scale used to measure emotion regulation intends to engage the participants in thinking about how they regulate the experience of negative emotions. The items are framed in a way that makes the participant cognitively engage with the actual process that one employs when faced with a difficult situation. While the statements may be slightly complicated, the participants were mostly comfortable with the language, and when asked about comprehension, they replied that they were able to understand what the items were asking for. Hence it is possible that when

probed to reflect on how one deals with negative feelings, the immediate association is with more personal and direct experiences than with thinking about the general environment or a persistent external situation. The revisiting or reappraising of past experiences and the need to focus on specific negative emotion-producing incidents can result in association with personal challenges and threats over and above more collective incidents.

A second probable explanation is that the experience of personal victimization, whether physical or psychological (harassment, proving identity), directly challenges the cognitive resources of an individual that equip him to modulate the experiential aspect of an event and thus regulate its emotional impact. There is adequate research suggesting that personal traumatic experiences, like abuse, can have implications for long-term emotional coping, including the ability to successfully regulate emotions (Marusak, Martin, Etkin, & Thomason, 2015). When individuals experience violence directly, cognitive and emotional engagement with the experience is high, wherein we seek to make sense of the event and question why it happened to us. Repeated exposure to violent events can specifically harm this process and thereby reduce our capacities for reappraisal and the need to think positively in the face of a negative event. This also implies that reappraisal interventions with communities need to take into account that those who have had direct experiences of violence may have a heightened response to similar events and decreased inclinations towards reappraisal that must be addressed separately and additionally.

Extremist mindset, ETV and cognitive reappraisal

Since emotion regulation has largely been studied as an individual process, associated with trauma and coping, whereas extremism is a collective group dimension, there is very little research so far looking at any interactions between these two variables. Some recent studies (Chebotareva, 2014) have pointed out significant negative correlation between ethnic bigotry (a measure of ethnic fanaticism and the willingness to go to any length for the group's rights) and the ability to regulate one's own emotions. Among the participants in this study, support for violence had a significant but not very strong negative correlation with cognitive reappraisal ($r = -.184$, $p < .05$). However, the interaction with ETV produced significant and interesting results that underline the role of mindset and individual inclinations, and how they affect the capacity to successfully deal with negative emotions (Table 4.5).

The model for testing the interaction effect of direct ETV and support for violence on cognitive reappraisal, when controlling for gender, was significant, $F (4,155) = 5.487$, $p < .01$, and it accounted for 12% of the variance in reappraisal. The interaction effect (Support * direct exposure) was the only

significant individual predictor in the model (coeff = –.059, p < .05) that contributed 3.2% to the variance in reappraisal. The conditional effect of direct exposure on reappraisal was significant at the mean (effect = –.048, p < .05) and +1SD (effect = –.094, p < .01). The interaction effect has been depicted in a graph below (Figure 4.1).

Table 4.5 Interaction effect of direct ETV and support for violence on cognitive reappraisal

Predictors	Coefficient	t- value	Significance level
Constant	4.951	34.800	.000
Support for violence	–.070	–.508	.612
Direct exposure	–.048	–1.968	.051
Support * direct exposure	–. 0587	–2.399	.018
Gender	–.126	–.568	.571

F = 5.487, p < .01, R^2 = .124, R^2 change due to interaction = .032
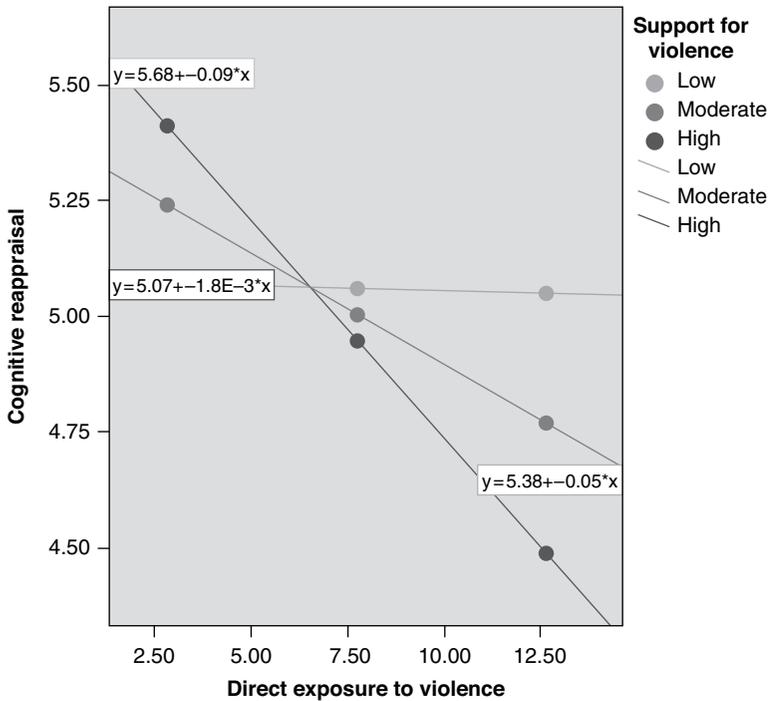
Figure 4.1 Interaction effect of support for violence and direct ETV on cognitive reappraisal.

At low levels of support for violence, the relationship between direct ETV and reappraisal is marginally and non-significantly negative, but with higher levels of pro-violent mindset, this relationship becomes increasingly strong, as the slopes in the graph indicate. Therefore support for violence moderates the relationship between direct ETV and cognitive reappraisal, with direct exposure having a greater negative association with reappraisal at increasing levels of a pro-violent mindset. The results indicate that individuals, who are more supportive of violence, tend to engage in cognitive reappraisal increasingly less as they experience more violence.

The idea of a vile world was the other dimension of extremist mindset measure that had a moderating effect on how direct ETV was associated with reappraisal among the participants. To test this, direct ETV, idea of a vile world and its interaction term (vile × direct exposure) were entered into a regression model that had gender as a covariate (Table 4.6).

The model was significant, $F_{(4,155)} = 5.926$, accounting for 13.3% of the variance in reappraisal. Direct ETV (coeff = −.705, $p < .01$) and its interaction with the idea of a vile world (coeff = −.056, $p < .01$) were both significant predictors, with the interaction adding 4.4% to the overall model explaining changes in reappraisal. The conditional effect of direct ETV on the outcome variable, that is, cognitive reappraisal, was significant at the mean (effect = −.071, $p < .01$) and +1SD (effect = −.120, $p < .01$) levels of the moderator. The effects were plotted on a graph, as shown below (Figure 4.2).

The negative relationship between direct ETV and cognitive reappraisal was moderated by idea of a vile world such that, with increasing levels of the moderator, the negative association between ETV and reappraisal becomes more significant and pronounced. Therefore the decrease in reappraisal with respect to increasing levels of violence exposure is strongest for those who believe the world to be dangerous and threatening. Hence for the current sample a stronger belief in a vile world was associated with less use of reappraisal strategies when encountered with direct experiences of violence.

Table 4.6 Interaction effect of direct exposure and idea of a vile world on cognitive reappraisal

Predictors	Coefficient	t- value	Significance level
Constant	4.912	35.763	.000
Idea of a vile world	.013	.121	.904
Direct exposure	−.071	−3.109	.002
Vile * direct exposure	−.056	−2.800	.005
Gender	−.133	.609	.544

F = 5.926, p < .01, R^2 = .133 R^2 change due to interaction = .044
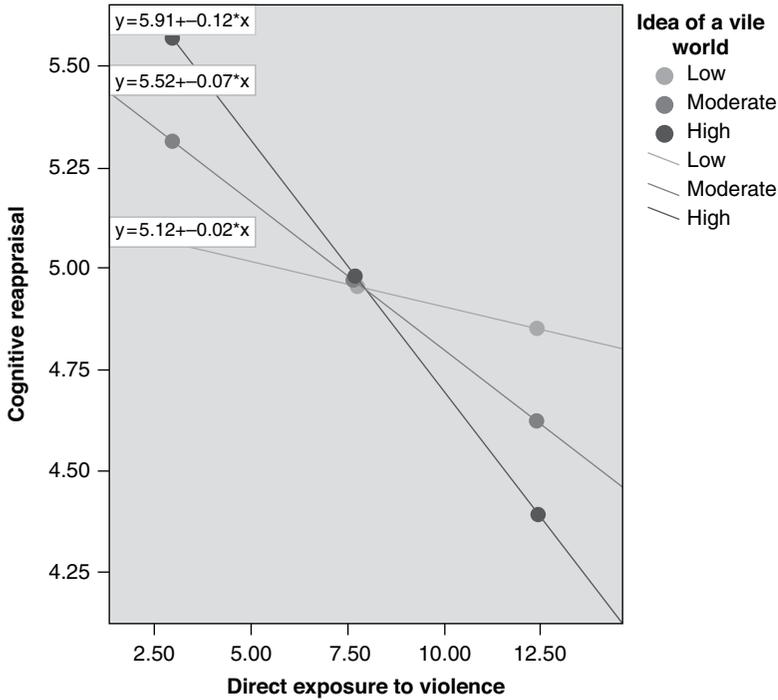
Figure 4.2 Interaction effect of idea of a vile world and direct ETV on cognitive reappraisal.

Support for violence and idea of a vile world both significantly moderated the negative relationship between direct ETV and cognitive reappraisal. At higher levels of both these dimensions of an extremist mindset, the negative relationship between ETV and reappraisal became more pronounced. Contrastingly, at low levels of both, especially support for violence, the relationship was marginally and non-significantly negative. Therefore, participants' experiences with direct violence predicted a reduction in cognitive reappraisal only at moderate and higher levels of an extremist mindset. Since this finding is new and most probably has not been investigated prior to this research, any explanation of it is only speculative at this juncture and will need more focussed and comprehensive studies to understand how emotion regulation maybe associated with factors like extremist thoughts and individual mindsets. Nonetheless an initial explanatory proposition is made based on the more extensive literature that is available regarding antecedents and consequences of extremism with respect to individual attitudes and behaviour (Klein & Kruglanski, 2013). This body of work focusses

on the link between uncertainty—personal need for uncertainty reduction and consequent adherence to systems of belief that provide meaning and a sense of certainty about goals. These belief systems can be ideological and identity-based movements that give individuals a sense of purpose and fulfil the search for personal and collective meaning, resulting in extremist attitudes and the lack of alternate cognitive and emotional engagement. From this perspective extremist ideas like support for violence and idea of a vile world represent a rigid and collective orientation towards a goal that may be increasingly sought out by individuals who are looking to reduce the uncertainties prevalent in a context of conflict. More relevant to the present findings, though, is the shift in cognitive process that might happen once an extremist worldview is adopted. Hogg & Adelman (2013) suggest that uncertainty reduction which is specifically disturbing to the self (as direct experiences of violence can be) requires a great amount of cognitive investment, which implies reduced cognitive activities directed towards other goals. Hence encountering long and repeated episodes of violence can be overwhelming enough to adversely affect individual capacity for emotional coping and meaning making in such environments. Gelfand, Lafee, Fahey and Feinberg (2013) refer to a similar idea of breakdown in complexity of thought and behaviour that is observed in cultures that strongly promote rigid and fatalistic ideas about the world and are high in group cohesiveness. The idea of a dangerous world is closely associated with perceived threat and suspicion of others that can simultaneously lead to in-group solidarity and close networks within the community, based on the protection and enhancement needs of group based identity (Muldoon, 2013; Muldoon & Lowe, 2012; Seul, 2012; Teichman, Bar-Tal, & Abdoleazeq, 2007). The strong in-group identity is evident among Kashmiri youth as well, who often talk in terms of the 'violent other' and the 'victimized us'. Behera (2012) mentions the 'in-ward looking' characteristic of the present generation of Kashmiri youth, who are immersed in the local narrative and seem distant from information and ideas that are outside their present context. Shah (2012) talks about 'national amnesia' and 'cultural anxiety' in the context of Kashmir, and describes how the long-drawn conflict has resulted in the sharing of narratives that are often exaggerated and modified due to the lack of documentation of actual events. These memories are related to the shared sense of anxiety and insecurity that breeds constant fear and suspicion of the opposition while simultaneously creating and recreating collective memories that are strongly adhered to, given their essential role in sustaining the group's sense of self and identity. These processes of narrative making and sharing can create specific and rigid worldviews that become fundamental to the existence of a group in crises. Extending this argument to the field of emotion regulation, one can assume that, with a strong and rigid mindset, individuals are more engaged in perceiving situations within that worldview and thereby may not indulge in cognitive

processes to change the nature of emotions they feel when encountering violent events. Moreover, adherence to a collective and rigid narrative may promote emotional experiences that will reinforce feelings of anger and hatred, and strengthen accounts of victimization and vulnerability. Adding to this, the fact that cognitive reappraisal is closely associated with personal and direct traumatic experiences further highlights that violent environments and the adoption of a dominant narrative of victimization and perceived threat can affect individual ways of coping and managing negative emotions. This macro to micro (context to person) link also emphasizes the reverse association, that is, the importance of addressing individual emotional processes in dealing with larger socio-political realities, like violent conflicts. It becomes essential to look into individual and intervening factors, like attitudes towards violence and perceptions of others, in efforts towards strength-building and empowering youth emotionally to deal with the repercussions of conflict, and in overall resolution and transformation.

Summary

Examining emotions and their management is increasingly becoming an essential focus within the social psychological approach to the study of collective violence. Before looking at individual emotional and behavioural tendencies, this chapter focussed on how ETV can affect emotion regulation strategies. Emotion regulation is the inclination and ability to manage the experience and expression of negative emotions. To summarize, the findings give a clear indication of the emotional consequences of living in long-drawn conflict by highlighting the significant relationship between exposure to direct violence and emotion regulation, specifically the ability to reappraise negative emotional experiences. Moreover, support for violence and the idea of a vile world showed significant interaction effects with ETV, wherein the relationship between ETV and reappraisal was notably stronger for those who are more accepting of violent methods and consider the world to be dangerous and harmful towards their community. This re-emphasizes that protracted conflict situations that could sustain extremist attitudes can further discourage positive emotional coping.

5

CONFLICT, AGGRESSION AND GENDER
Re-viewing established links

When we think about dominant emotions in conflict, anger, frustration and fear stand out as obvious sentiments that are generated by violence. Long-term conflicts produce inescapable conditions of sustained fear of danger, anger towards the opposition and/or at the state for the lack of protection and safety, and frustration that is born out of the uncertainty and unpredictability of living in conflict. In most cases these intense negative emotions produce the need and desire to act out violently and express anger in the form of aggression. Frustration, anger, hostility and humiliation are all related to the construct of aggression, which is one of the most common and widely explored emotions in the context of conflict. The general observation that sustained conflict situations produce radical and aggressive repercussions in the form of terrorism and violent resistance further highlights the focus on anger and aggression in relation to violent conflicts.

Aggression is generally viewed as that behaviour which is directed towards another individual and done with the intent to cause harm. It is a multidimensional construct which includes neurological, cognitive, cultural, behavioural and moral components (Opotow, 2006). Anderson and Bushman (2002, p. 28) emphasize the intentionality aspect of aggression by pointing out that a behaviour may be considered aggressive when "carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm" where both the perpetrator and the target are aware of the harmful effect of the concerned action. Buss and Perry (1992) moved beyond an actor-receiver paradigm of aggressive behaviour to include the concepts of anger and hostility in their measurement for aggression and to highlight that aggression may not always be overt and directed at an entity in particular but is often more complex, covert and self-perpetrating. Various typologies of aggression exist, like affective aggression, reactive aggression, instrumental aggression, frustration induced aggression and so on (Berkowitz, 1989; Feshbach, 1964; Dollard, 1939). Most of these findings reiterate that aggression, especially in the form of physical violence, is usually of two kinds: that which is in reaction to a threatening situation which provokes or frustrates and that which is

exhibited without the presence of any obvious instigating trigger. Proactive and instrumental aggression is often seen among those who are aggressive towards others in dominant ways, not preceded by threat. Bullying behaviour and childhood abuse, for instance, are situations where individuals in power can harm those who are vulnerable without any real or perceived threat, while reactive aggression can be born out of the need for self-defence, self-preservation and revenge. However, scholars have argued that indirect and reactive aggression is also the product of defensive and imitative behaviour that stems from how children understand violence and associate it with different situations. Aggression can also be indirect and seemingly passive, where the target is humiliated, alienated and denied benefits (for a review on indirect and social aggression see Archer & Coyne, 2005). Shalit (1998) points out that aggression, its cause, its direction and its purpose are influenced by a collective of factors which could be internally driven, like the need for self-perception, or as a reaction to an environmental cue. The multidimensional construct of aggression comprises intrinsic as well as a learned and acquired behaviour. Therefore aggression is both an internally driven response pattern caused by emotional arousal and cognitive sensing of a situational stressor, and a culturally learnt system of functions. This is why forms and manifestations of aggressive behaviour differ culturally and across socio-demographic variables like age, gender and location.

As psychology has expanded from an individual focussed orientation to the consideration of larger social factors, the understanding of anger, hostility and resulting aggression has developed accordingly. Initial psychodynamic theories viewed aggression as an inherent human tendency that needed to be expressed and would get expressed in violent ways, even when unconscious defences acted on them. For instance, childhood traumatic memories and the anger that resulted from experiencing them can be stored in the unconscious only to be released as adult violence towards others. Over the years the understanding of human aggression has been examined from a social learning and social constructivist perspective to highlight the context-emotion link that drives aggressive behaviour. Social learning theories on aggressive behaviour, championed by Bandura and others, set the stage for a robust series of explanations that showed how interpersonal as well as intergroup aggression, resulting from prejudice and stereotyping, was learned by children. Approaching the study of anger and aggression from a social-constructivist perspective, Averill (1983) found that the relationship between anger and physical aggression was not as strong as is generally assumed. Most of the participants in his study reported that the immediate reaction to an anger-provoking situation would be efforts to calm oneself, complaining to a neutral or third party, or even the indirect removal and denial of benefit to the offender. Where aggression was used, verbal aggression was more common than physical aggression. The author also noted that anger was in most cases caused by a perception of unfairness and the

attribution of blame to the other party. Hence, aggression is strongly influenced by how individuals process and perceive their environments wherein the expectation of hostility and the attribution of hostile intent to the other party can increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour (Calvete & Orue, 2011; Chaux, Arboleda, & Rincon, 2012). Within this framework, it is not surprising that violent conflicts, which perpetuate a constant feeling of threat, danger, injustice and the lack of alternate channels of expression, can create conditions for aggressive behaviour.

Exposure to violence and aggression

The strong relationship between exposure to violence (in the family, neighbourhood and the larger social context) and aggression has been tested and reported across locations. The context to person link when it comes to experiencing violence and developing violent tendencies is widely accepted, especially for environments where the macro-system is marked by consistent violence (Boxer et al., 2012). The intensity of aggressive behaviour is determined by social affiliations such that an individual is likely to be more aggressive towards those who are viewed as outsiders to one's in-group (Winstock, 2010). Juxtaposing this with Averill's (1983) findings, which suggest that individuals tend to feel more anger towards loved ones, brings to light an important distinction that may exist between interpersonal and intergroup aggression. In the interpersonal context, the feeling of being unjustly harmed or hurt by a friend can produce more intense feelings of anger, whereas in an intergroup context, the prominence of shared emotions stemming from a collective identity can perpetuate more anger towards the out-group than towards one's own group members. This is more likely in contexts marked by identity distinctions and polarization, which are characteristic of protracted conflicts. Second it highlights a distinction between anger and aggression that is of significance to the present study. There is a difference between the emotion of anger and its expression through aggressive behaviour when it comes to who the target is and the context in which it is expressed. While we may feel more anger towards loved ones we may refrain from showing it aggressively. Yet in intergroup contexts, and particularly those that are divisive and conflicted, anger towards the out-group can manifest in aggression in some circumstances.

Krenawi, Lev-Wiesel, and Sehwail (2006) found support for the prominence of intense negative emotions in conflict and the high probability of feeling hostile and angry after experiencing violence. This particular study examined psychological distress among Palestinian youth exposed to violence and found that many of the participants reported hostile feelings as a symptom of violence exposure as opposed to psychological distress and PTSD symptomatology. McCouch (2009) found that exposure to neighbourhood violence, which was common during the ethno-political conflict

in Bosnia, significantly predicted post-war criminality, including the willingness to engage in, and participation in, physically aggressive behaviour. The continuation of the exposure to behaviour cycle, beyond the conflict situation and into a post-conflict scenario, is an extremely important finding with regard to the normative structure of beliefs and perceptions that is affected and changed by a period of intense conflict. As discussed in the previous chapters, situations of protracted conflict are often characterized by the dominance of conflict-supporting ideas and beliefs that are different from non-conflict mindsets. The shift in normative beliefs about the acceptance and need for violence can have a strong influence on the association between violence exposure and resulting aggression. Niwa et al. (2016) found that youth who showed high levels of endorsement and acceptance of violence supporting normative beliefs were more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour and be emotionally de-sensitized.

From a developmental perspective, exposure to collective violence affects young children significantly more negatively than it does older youths; adolescents are likely to develop more aggressive tendencies when they have been exposed to violence. Taylor (2013) explored the very important question about whether violence leads to more violence among young to older adolescents in Northern Ireland. The results showed that participation in out-group directed sectarian violent behaviour significantly predicted aggression among the study participants. The findings point to a circular relationship between exposure to and participation in out-group directed sectarian anti-social behaviour and aggression, where exposure to initial aggression, the level of increase over time and the gender of the participant (more for male) was associated with an increased likelihood of sectarian anti-social behaviour. She also found that the predicted violent behaviour was weaker for older adolescents and participants with a supportive and cohesive family environment. The author suggests that the findings highlight an interaction between person and context, and not just a passive role for the individual who gets affected by violence. Here the association between violence exposure and individual behaviour is presented from the reverse perspective, showing that individual factors of participations, affiliation, mindset and attitudes play a crucial role in how the experience of violence is processed and, in turn, affects behaviour (Taylor, Merrillees, Goeke-Morey, Shirlow & Cummings, 2014). Second the finding on the particular vulnerability of younger youth to the effects of violence is of importance and has been suggested by other psychologists as well (Qouta, Punamaki, Miller, & El-Sarraj, 2008). Conflicts that have been ongoing for decades ensure that children are exposed to periods of escalated violence throughout their formative years continuing into adolescence and adulthood. In the Kashmir Valley the youth of today were born into the conflict and have experienced repeated periods of intense collective violence. From the occupation and searching of homes, public arrests and interrogation that was

common during the 1990s to the more sporadic yet intense episodes of mass protest and police resistance in the next decade, it is not unlikely that the experience of violence has been a developmentally constant factor. The exposure to violence in childhood and early adolescence, and into early adulthood is presuambly a significant factor that determines patterns of present behaviour, including aggressive tendencies.

The association between witnessing violent events and aggressive behaviour among children and adolescents is complicated by several factors that intervene. For instance parents' attitudes and justification of violence can significantly mediate this relationship such that the more parents endorse and use violence themselves the higher the likelihood that children develop aggressive behaviour (Qouta et al., 2008). Cotten et al. (1994) found among a sample of African American adolescents that age (being older) and gender (being male) was positively related to aggressive behaviour. Also, individual attitude towards violence, representing how much an individual endorses the use of coercion, was positively correlated with aggressive behaviour, even though the majority of the sample did not support the use of violence. This highlights the possible association between a pro-violent attitude and the use or belief in aggressive behaviour. Second it points to the importance of demographic factors like location, age and gender, which strongly affect the extent of aggression and the form in which it manifests. There is abundant literature that supports the common observation that men tend to be more aggressive than women. However this conclusion by itself is a simplistic representation of complex social conditioning and therefore only limited in its explanation. Several studies exploring this linear relationship have found significant effects of intervening variables, like the gender differences in threat perception and social sanctions encouraging or inhibiting aggressive behaviour, and the preference of indirect forms of aggression among women (Richardson & Green, 1999).

Some authors report on the surprisingly positive effects of anger and aggression, like Weierstall and colleagues (2013), who found that in a disadvantaged urban youth population that is highly exposed to continuous traumatic conditions, appetitive aggression (the tendency to be violent and act out aggressive urges rather than aversive techniques) may be useful in coping with psychosocial stresses and increase social support and self-esteem. Similarly, Tagar, Federico and Halperin (2011) confirm through field and laboratory studies that anger in a situation of intergroup conflict can sometimes trigger support for non-violent policies, even though it is associated with aggression and risk-taking.

Thus there is adequate support for the assumption that conflict situations and violent environments increase the likelihood of aggression in its various forms. The literature, though vast, is often contradictory and mixed when reporting on the nature of aggression that is most closely associated with exposure to violence. Moreover, while supporting studies are available from other contexts, we don't have a clear understanding of the links

between violence, attitudes that support violence and consequent anger and aggression among Kashmiri youth. Lastly there is also an need to see whether and how aggression in situations of conflict maybe gendered. To address these questions, the present research explored the relationship between exposure to direct and collective violence, and aggression among the youth in Kashmir Valley. Aggression was measured with the help of Buss and Perry's Aggression Questionnaire (1992), which captures four distinct components of aggression: namely (i) Anger (I have trouble controlling my temper), (ii) Hostility (I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things), (c) Verbal aggression (I often find myself disagreeing with people) and (d) Physical aggression (I have threatened people I know). Participants were asked to indicate how characteristic or uncharacteristic each of the statements is in describing them along a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings were in line with some basic expectations while also bringing up surprising insights. The distinct themes that emerged from the analysis are discussed below.

Aggression: findings

Figure 5.1 shows that on average, the level of physical aggression reported by the participants was lower than those of verbal aggression, anger and hostility. The majority of the participants (about 75%) disagreed with most of the statements that supported physically aggressive behaviour, indicating low levels of self-reported physical aggression.
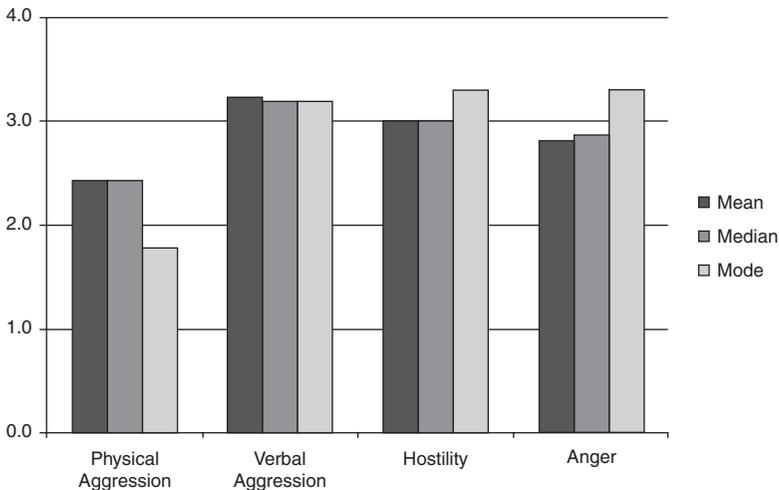
Figure 5.1 Mean, median and mode for all sub-scales of aggression.
Source: Author

For the other forms of aggression, there was a more uniform distribution of responses across the scale, indicating that while some participants did not self-report feelings of hostility or anger, or engage in verbal aggression, an equal number of others did. Verbal aggression was the most commonly reported with almost 50% of the participants agreeing to having expressed themselves openly and strongly in arguments, and being assertive in conversations.

ETV and physical aggression among youth in Kashmir

Bivariate correlation results were only significant for physical aggression, which had a positive correlation with both direct and collective exposure to violence (Table 5.1). This suggests that with the increase in exposure to direct and collective violence there is a mild but significant increase in physical aggression. The other non-significant correlations could be a methodological issue, that is, the questions measuring these dimensions somehow did not capture the construct. This is possible because several items on the Aggression Questionnaire, especially ones relating to anger, use language ('fly off the handle') that may not be culturally relevant. These questions were retained because the pilot study did not show any statistical issues. Yet conceptually they may not have been as comprehensible as the ones on physical aggression. Second, if exposure to violence has a strong relationship with physical aggression only, this in itself may be an interesting point to explore further, particularly in the context of Kashmir. The Valley has seen repeated episodes of overt violence and altercations between the armed forces and the civilian population in recent years. Street protests, stone pelting and counter-attacks involving pellet guns and tear gas have been commonplace. Hence physical aggression as a close reaction to the environment of conflict in the region is indicative of the general sentiment that may be prevailing in the Valley. The more underlying concepts of anger and hostility, and their possible association with environmental cues might require an in-depth exploration and thereby may have not come through in the survey questionnaire.

To further investigate the relationship between ETV and physical aggression, direct and collective exposure to violence and gender as predictors

Table 5.1 Bivariate correlations between direct and collective ETV and aggression (N = 160)

	Outcome variables	Direct exposure	Collective exposure
Aggression	Physical aggression	.278[**]	.250[**]
	Verbal aggression	.059	.08
	Hostility	−.027	.076
	Anger	.123	.108

Note:
*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 5.2 Direct and collective exposure to violence, gender and physical
aggression (N = 160)

Predictors	Beta	t- value	Significance level
Constant		–13.533	.000
Gender	–.152	–1.765	.080
Direct	.137	1.355	.177
Collective	.115	1.206	.230

F = 6.152, p < .01, R^2 = .106, Adjusted R^2 = .089

and physical aggression as the dependent variable were entered in a multiple linear regression model which was found to be significant, F (3,156) = 6.152, p < .05, and explained 9% of the variance in physical aggression. Table 5.2 presents the findings from the analysis.

The model did not yield any significant independent relationships. The strong correlation with gender was possibly interfering with the effect of exposure to violence in this case. This was not surprising since gender has been found to be a significant intervening variable influencing the behavioural outcome of physical aggression in previous research. Therefore, the interaction effect of gender and exposure to violence was tested using PROCESS Macro to understand if and how the effect of violence exposure on physical aggression was dependent on gender. The model for collective exposure to violence, F (3,156) = 8.175, p < .01, was stronger and explained more amount of the variance, that is, 17.4%, in physical aggression than direct exposure, F (3,156) = 7.659, p < .01, R^2 = .165. The R^2 change showing the unique variance attributed to the interaction term was also more for collective exposure x gender (6.8%) than direct exposure x gender (5.9%) (Table 5.3).

Moreover gender, collective exposure to violence and its interaction with gender emerged as significant independent predictors when controlling for direct exposure to violence in the first model. In the second model, gender and its interaction with direct exposure to violence were the only significant predictors. The conditional effect of collective exposure to violence on physical aggression at two levels of gender, that is, for men and women, was only significant for men (t = 3.530, p < .01), whereas for direct exposure, the effect was significant for both men (t = 2.598, p < .05) and women (t = –2.042, p < .05) (Figure 5.2).

Collective exposure to violence significantly predicted an increase in physical aggression among men in the sample, while for women the relationship was negative though not significant. Direct exposure to violence significantly predicted physical aggression in both men and women. However while the direction was positive for men, that is, more exposure was associated with more aggression, it was inverse for women, where more exposure led to less physical aggression.

Table 5.3 Interaction of gender with direct and collective exposure to violence on physical aggression (N = 160)

I Model	Predictors	Coefficient	t- value	Significance level
Collective exposure to violence as independent variable	Constant	2.355	19.051	.000
	Gender	−.274	−2.283	.024
	Collective exposure	.032	2.425	.016
	Gender * Collective	−.080	−3.584	.000
	Direct exposure	.003	.181	.857

F = 8.175, p < .01, R² = .174, R² change due to interaction = .068

II Direct exposure to violence as independent variable	Constant	2.119	14.216	.000
	Gender	−.358	−2.822	.005
	Direct exposure	.011	−.062	.951
	Gender * Direct	−.094	−3.316	.001
	Collective exposure	.019	1.501	.135

F = 7.659, p < .01, R² = .165, R² change due to interaction = .059
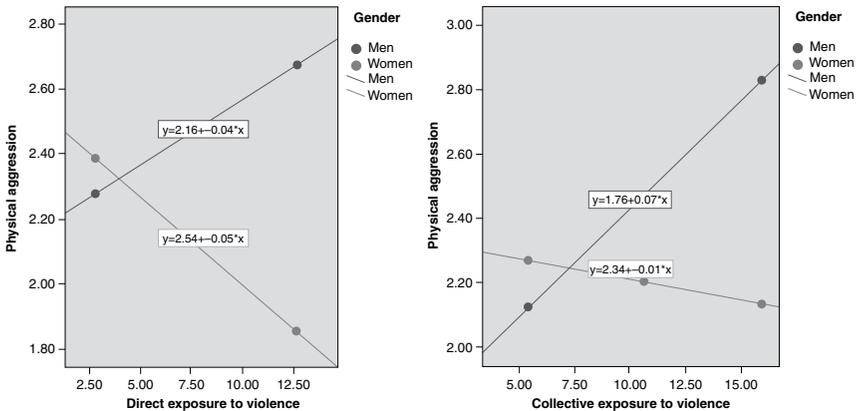
Figure 5.2 Interaction effect of gender and exposure to violence on physical aggression.

Source: Author

Revisiting aggression in conflict: a gendered analysis

When I started this research I did not presume or expect to examine the role of gender in any of the hypothesized relationships that I was looking at. This was for two reasons: First my own perspective was limited, and embarrassingly enough I had very little understanding of how gender interacts with every social psychological phenomenon in human communities. I had, of course, been exposed to a gendered lens, but this lens was extremely narrow and compartmentalized. Second, not a lot of work on conflict and its psychological repercussions had delved into the aspect of gender significantly, and given that this body of mainstream psychological literature informed my own work initially, I was also unaware of the futility of trying to engage with this theme without a gendered lens. Today I believe that the gendered lens that I discovered while interacting with peers and others in Kashmir and thereafter through my dedicated interest in exploring the same not only reflects my own journey as a researcher but is one of the most important findings for the research as well. Through increased interest and engagement with this theme I have come to realize that just like any other social context, a context of conflict is not free of gender. In fact the persistent violence accentuates differences in how men and women interact with their realities, cope with their trauma and live their lives in these regions. This understanding has notably influenced several of my writings on the Kashmir conflict (for more see Khan & Majumdar, 2017) and is increasingly becoming a prominent area of focus within inter-disciplinary conflict studies. I have talked about the gendered perspective on conflict in Kashmir in another article (Majumdar & Khan, 2014), wherein I discuss how Kashmir, like other contexts of conflict, is dominated by a masculine militarized narrative and the implications of the same for the representation of women and their stories of victimization. Here I particularly look at the relationship between violence, aggression and gender to present one such narrative that highlights the difference in how men and women react to violence. The idea is to not only present how differently women could be dealing with their experiences of violence but also to encourage more exploration into this difference, to expand our lens on the understanding of violence and related behaviour.

The findings showed two important differences between men and women in the way that ETV was associated with physical aggression. First, collective exposure had a stronger predictive effect on physical aggression for men, while for women, direct exposure to violence was more significant. Second, while exposure to violence had a significant relationship with an increase in aggression for men, it had a negative correlation with aggression for women. The gender aspect of physical aggression

has been reported widely in literature (Averill, 1983; Cotten et al., 1994; Slone, 2009) and confirmed in findings from contexts of political violence (Taylor, 2013). In Kashmir, exposure to violence is clearly gendered with respect to confrontation with the opposition and active participation in resistance (Behera, 2006; Shekhawat, 2014), which is a space dominated by men. Probing into the nature of the association between exposure to violence and aggression revealed that male participants showed a higher aggression-collective exposure association than with direct exposure. Therefore witnessing violence on friends, family and in the community in general significantly contributed to the level of aggression among men over and above their own experiences with violence. This association was positive, that is, more exposure to collective violence indicated higher levels of physical aggression.

Firstly, in a context of protracted social conflict like that in Kashmir, the lines between direct and collective exposure to violence were more blurred than expected, with very high correlations between the two sub-categories of exposure to violence. Kaminer, du Plessis, Hardy, and Benjamin (2013) emphasized this aspect of poly-victimization in societies exposed to high levels of violence, where direct and collective experiences are highly correlated and may contribute to emotional outcomes collectively.

Yet similar findings, with respect to the more significant role of witnessing violence, have previously been reported in literature (Qouta et al., 2008; Schaal & Elbert, 2006). Collective violence creates a condition of insecurity and danger, where not only the individual as a person but his family, neighbourhood, group and community is vulnerable and victimized (Baker & Kanam, 2003). Witnessing violence on friends specifically had a significant correlation with physical aggression among male participants, though the relationship was not significant over and above other forms of exposure. Witnessing violence on friends was one of the most frequent experiences reported by the participants and could have had a particularly large impact on male youth. In the recent past, the people's struggle in Kashmir has taken the form of street protests by students and youth, and consequent retaliation from the paramilitary forces in the form of curfew, beatings and various other restrictions on expression and movement. Most of the respondents recalled incidents where another male friend or neighbour was injured or beaten while participating in street protests. Punamaki (2009) points out that collective violence is related to ideology formation and participation in a collective narrative-driven ideology. A similar trend is seen in Kashmir, where the dominant narrative is recollected by large numbers of male youth, actively involved in incidents of protests that have happened in the recent past. The collective narrative of violence and associated political ideology that holds the other as responsible for the in-group's suffering is responsible for making individuals more inflexible in their thoughts and

emotions, leading to greater risk for impulsive and aggressive behaviour. Therefore the greater objective episodes of actual violence exposure, the prevalence and importance of the various forms of collective exposure to violence and the possible gender aspect of politics and political ideology associated with the Kashmiri resistance movement may all be factors that are responsible for higher degrees of reported physical aggression among men, with an increase in confrontations with collective violence.

In the case of women, both direct and collective exposure to violence was associated with a decrease in physical aggression, though only the relationship with direct exposure to violence was significant. This may be a contextual factor, given that women are less exposed to direct violence than men and may hence be more affected by it. Incidents of collective violence that include witnessing violence on others seems to be more comparable between the two groups, with women reporting many incidents of witnessing violence against their male family members. Also, Kashmiri men have been comparatively more engaged with the political ideology and ongoing violence and protests in Kashmir than their women counterparts. The more active involvement, greater participation and a stronger adherence to the collective narrative can explain the significant role of witnessing violence with respect to aggressive behaviour for male participants when compared to women in the sample (Barber & Olsen, 2009). Direct experiences of being physically attacked or exposed to tear gas, etc. might have other emotional consequences for women vis-à-vis men who may appraise these conditions differently, perceive them as provocative and thus feel more physically aggressive (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996). Because physical aggression is socioculturally more relevant for men, women may alternately feel emotions, like anger, fear, humiliation and shame, on encountering personal experiences of violence. The possibility that women feel more inward directed emotions like shame and guilt rather than outward directed feelings of aggression can implicate distinct coping strategies and intervention requirements for the same. In Kashmir, experiences with violence have overtly created different realities for men and women, prominent in the current scenario of a militarized public and civic life. While many male youth have been driven out to the streets and have actively become involved in the politics of separation and self-determination, the fear of sexual attacks and general lack of physical security has limited movement and access for women to a large extent.

In a meta-analytic review, Archer (2004) found that sex differences were reportedly the greatest for physical aggression and not significant in the case of anger. The author asks a pertinent question here, with reference to the differences between men and women in ways that they express their anger, which seems to be similar for both. If women do not engage in overt forms of aggression, like physical aggression, then how do they express their anger? One assumption could be that because of social roles and conditioning,

women are inherently less aggressive and experience lower degrees of anger than men. However the mean scores on anger were more comparable between men and women in the sample (men = 2.8, women = 2.7) than differences in physical aggression (men = 2.6, women = 2.2), corroborating Archer's argument and indicating that this may not be the case.

Averill (1983) believes that beyond certain gender specific modes of reaction (like becoming provoked or reacting to provocative situations) women experience anger as much as men when it is related to injustice and when it harms their sense of self. Does this mean that displaced and un-expressed anger manifests in other forms among women? If anger, fear or feelings of humiliation is associated more with exposure to violence in the case of women, then what may be the possible outcome of that?

Previous research has examined the relationship between anger and depression (Biaggio & Godwin, 1987). Busch (2009) discusses how anger that is not expressed and that is more inward directed can cause conflicts that lead to depressive mood and lowered self-esteem. Research has consistently found evidence for higher levels of psychological distress among women as compared to men (Slone, 2009). Similarly, studies in Kashmir confirm a higher degree of depression and related mental health issues among women (Amin & Khan, 2009; Parveen & Shafiq, 2014). De Jong and colleagues (2008) found that among the women in Kashmir, psychological distress, which was significantly higher than it was in men, was closely associated with feelings of powerlessness, dependency on others and witnessing killings and torture. Dewan (2002) outlines a similar conclusion when she describes the various forms and incidents of violence that women in the Valley have experienced; humiliation and sexual violence at the hands of the security forces and militants, and drastic impositions on freedom and choice as a result of the fear of sexual violence as well as the growing religious fundamentalism among native Kashmiris. Simultaneously women's health complaints have drastically increased, with multiple issues related to anxiety, sleeplessness and other physical and emotional symptoms of depression. A probable explanation for the elevated levels of anxiety and mood difficulties among women is the inability to express anger emanating from feelings of injustice, humiliation and frustration in ways that men may be able to. On the one hand, culturally sustained patriarchal norms, coupled with the militarized masculinity of conflict, have ensured many invisible and complex levels of victimization for women, while political engagement; participation; and the associated feeling of collective mobilization, which can be a constructive coping mechanism, remain disproportionately male dominated. Thus, while conditions of frustration and fear continue to be as strong, if not stronger, among women in the Valley, the opportunity to address these fears or express this anger is limited. Over the years, women have become more involved in the political struggle, but their

overall presence is still marginal when compared to the number of men. Amin and Khan (2009) highlight that irrespective of the fact that Kashmiri women are significantly affected by the ongoing conflict, their voices are fewer and less heard.

Feminist scholarship within and from outside psychology has already addressed the gendered representation of distress, hysteria and other mental illnesses that used to be seen as largely 'women's disorders'. These critical accounts have discussed how the marginalization and repression of women's desires, needs and voices are important factors to consider when looking at cross-gender comparisons of mental illnesses. Similarly, a gendered lens is required to adequately capture how exposure to conflict related violence affects behaviours. The gender differences in psychosocial manifestations of experiences of violence are closely embedded within the sociocultural context and include various possible paths like the one from exposure to violence, related feelings of anger and hatred to how they are expressed. The militaristic nature of conflict spaces like Kashmir (Majumdar & Khan, 2014) that mark women as 'passive victims' produces intricate layers of violence that range from the community to the private space of home, denies avenues of solidarity and expression, and could thereby create an elevated risk of mental health issues.

Proximity to violence and aggressive behaviour

Physical aggression was the only outcome variable that had a significant bivariate correlation with all the sub-categories of exposure to violence. It was therefore interesting to examine which type of exposure would most strongly relate to the likelihood of exhibiting physical aggression. This was tested in a model with physical aggression as outcome and the different categories of direct and collective exposure as predictor variables (Table 5.4).

The model revealed that direct exposure to violence on one's home and witnessing violence against friends had the lowest beta values and were acting as suppressor variables. Therefore to get a better-fit model, direct

Table 5.4 Type of exposure to violence and physical aggression (N = 160)

	Predictors	Beta	t-value	Significance level
Direct Exposure	Constant		15.930	.000
	Personal	.187	2.057	.041
Collective exposure	Family	.155	1.685	.094
	Collective	.035	.388	.699
F = 5.744, p < .01, R² = .099, Adjusted R² = .082				

F = 5.744, p < .01, R^2 = .099, Adjusted R^2 = .082

personal exposure to violence, witnessing violence on family and collective violence were tested as predictors. The resulting model was significant, $F_{(3,156)} = 5.744$, $p < .01$, and direct personal exposure to violence had a significant predictive relationship with physical aggression (beta = .187, $p < .05$), accounting for about 8% of the variance in aggression.

The significant relationship between direct personal exposure to violence and physical aggression adds to similar findings from previous work, which highlight the higher probability of acting aggressively when the experience of victimization is more personal. Individuals tend to have more externalizing problems, like acting out aggressively, when they are attacked themselves as compared to witnessing violence or hearing about community violence (Fowler et al., 2009). Shalit (1988) believes that aggressive reactions depend on the appraisal of a situation or the perception of a provocative act as threatening or frustrating, and the degree determines the response. The fact that direct experiences of violence can be perceived as particularly threatening and unsettling for an individual explains why these events predict a higher degree of physical aggression. Additionally, Fowler and colleagues (2009) present a social-cognitive explanation of the stronger effect of direct victimization on physical aggression by pointing out that personal incidents of violence can reinforce the normality of violence and thereby encourage individuals to use violence as a behavioural pattern. When we try to make sense of violent incidents that affected us directly and personally, the heightened emotionality may cause cognitive biases towards the acceptance and justification of violent behaviour, along with the numbing of other emotions. The inability to process alternate ways of dealing with the trauma simultaneously creates a higher likelihood that aggression directed outwards will dominate as a behavioural tendency. This adds evidence to the old yet relevant question of whether being a victim of violence can predict the use of violence in the future. As was seen in the previous chapter, many of the participants had experienced several incidents wherein they were personally vulnerable and exposed to serious threats. When we examine the extent of this exposure, with several participants reporting that direct incidents, like being checked, harassed, interrogated and subjected to tear gas, were experienced more than once, it gives a probable sociopsychological foreground to understanding the anger and aggression that is seen during street protests and other encounters with the armed forces. Yet the reported levels of physical aggression were lower than those of hope, reappraisal and verbal aggression, emphasizing that while the link with violence exposure is strong, physical aggression is still not a common or preferred behavioural reaction in general. This also brings us to question whether pre-exiting values and attitudes make a difference when a situation of violence persists and can influence this cycle of violence exposure to aggressive behaviour.

Support for violence, ETV and physical aggression

There is growing evidence to support the idea that individuals differ in their probability of showing physically aggressive behaviour when exposed to violence, which is determined by pre-existing mindsets and attitude towards violence. To examine this moderating effect the following model was tested (Table 5.5).

Shown in the table below is the output for regression analysis using PROCESS Macro to test the interaction effect of direct exposure to violence and support for violence on physical aggression, when controlling for gender and collective exposure to violence. The resulting model was significant, F (5,154) = 9.185, p < .01, and it accounted for 23% of the variance in physical aggression. The interaction effect (Support * direct exposure 1) was significant (coeff = –.313, p < 005), while support for violence was the other significant independent predictor, with a high coefficient (beta = .331, p < .01). The significant r^2 change was 2.9% (p < .05), attributed to the addition of the interaction effect to the overall model. The association between physical aggression and direct exposure to violence was plotted at three levels of support for violence, namely low, moderate and high, representing –1SD, mean and +1SD of the moderator variable. This conditional effect was highest at –1SD (effect = .035) though not significant.

At low levels of support for violence direct exposure is positively associated with physical aggression. This association, however, gradually declines at moderate levels of support for violence, becoming negative at high levels. The role of a pro-violent mindset and its substantial association with physical aggression was also captured in the model for collective violence, which, though significant, did not yield any interaction effect. Thus, while we see that collective exposure to violence has a strong association with increased physical aggression among men, individual mindset does not seem to interact with this relationship. Individual attitudes towards violence are more strongly connected to personal experiences of violence and their association with aggressive behaviour.

Table 5.5 Interaction effect of direct exposure and support for violence on physical aggression

Predictors	Coefficient	t-value	Significance level
Constant	2.386	15.685	.000
Support for violence	.331	4.594	.000
Direct exposure	.011	.729	.462
Support * direct exposure	–.031	–2.442	.015
Gender	–.145	–1.247	.214
Collective exposure	.015	1.217	.226

F = 9.185, p < .01, R^2 = .229, R^2 change due to interaction = .029
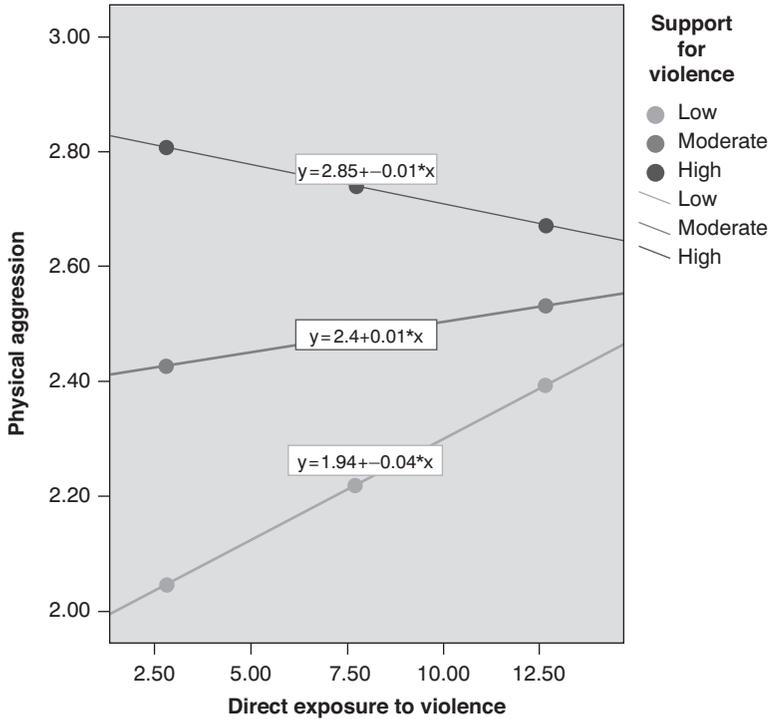
Figure 5.3 Interaction effect of support for violence and exposure to violence on physical aggression.

Source: Author

The findings (as shown in Figure 5.3) indicate that for people who are not very supportive of violence, experiencing violence on a personal level can lead to heightened physical aggression. For those who are highly supportive of violence, exposure to direct confrontations marginally reduces physical aggression. This suggests that people who do not endorse violence in general are more affected when they encounter incidents of violence on a one to one basis, which may then fuel feelings of anger and aggression towards the out-group. The more curious finding that needs further exploration is that the slope of the relationship between exposure to violence and aggression is less steep as support for violence increases and in fact negative at high levels of a pro-violent mindset. This challenges the notion that with increased exposure to violence and a more rigid cognitive repertoire that perpetuates and strengthens militaristic views, people may tend to become more aggressive and inflexible in their behaviour (Punamaki, 2009). According to

the results this may be true up to a certain degree of support for violence, beyond which the nature of the relationship is altered. One possibility could be that beyond a degree of pro-violent mindset, violence exposure creates a sense of complete powerlessness and disillusionment rather than inciting aggressive feelings. Under this condition, an individual may have a mindset that supports violence and militaristic ideas, but an actual confrontation with these may lead to less aggressive behaviour. Roach (2013) talks about this aspect of 'emotional desensitization' or the lack of appropriate or heightened response in the face of multiple and repeated exposure to violence. On the other hand, an extremist mindset often acts as a coping mechanism used by people to deal with the distress of ongoing violence and high levels of threat (Canetti et al., 2013; Punamaki et al., 2008). In line with the uncertainty reduction hypothesis, conflict supporting beliefs are used by individuals to not only make sense of the destructiveness of conflict but also maintain a sense of self and community with a particular purpose. These conflict supporting extremist ideas often endorse the use of violence as a means to the desired end, making individuals more accepting of militaristic options to overcome their current status. Simultaneously this may reduce the drastic negative effect of exposure to violence on individual emotions and behaviour, and consequently reduce the levels of aggression stemming from victimization. Thus for people whose mindset is supportive of militaristic and violent actions and ideas, these beliefs could buffer the effect of direct violence on behavioural outcomes like aggression. Slone (2009) found a similar reverse U-curved relationship between exposure and the outcome of psychological distress among Palestinian children and concluded that higher levels of exposure to violence may lead to engagement and active participation in the political movement. Barber and Olsen (2009) discuss the dualistic outcomes of violence exposure, belief in political ideology, participation in activism and consequent emotions. They too found that Palestinian youth who were engaged in activism and believed in the motive of the movement often showed increased competency and efficacy to deal with the situation.

Support for violence might embody an active involvement with the movement and a firm belief in its essentiality, thereby making individuals feel more in control and less vulnerable to being affected by exposure to violence. It is important to explore this finding more comprehensively because irrespective of its possible buffering effect on physical aggression vis-à-vis exposure to violence, it represents a repertoire of conflict perpetrating ideas and beliefs that may hinder reconciliatory efforts and positive recovery from conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007). Importantly, though, this seemingly peculiar finding adds to a larger understanding of human behaviour in violent conflicts, where individuals develop a range of mechanisms to make sense of the violence and cope with the destruction of ordinary life. The altered environment can produce reactions and interactions that seem divergent

from a 'normal' understanding of emotions and behaviour, which needs to be addressed, keeping in mind the specific nature of large-scale violent conflicts.

Summary

Does violence beget violence? This has been an essential question of a large body of work within social psychology, which examines whether exposure to violence, especially during childhood and adolescence, can predict aggressive behaviour. The results have been indicative, though often confusing and contradictory. This chapter focusses on this violent environment-experience-aggressive behaviour link and re-examines this line of thought from the lens of gender. Also, pro-violent attitudes have previously been found to accentuate aggressive behaviour in conflict contexts. But findings from this research showed that individuals who seemed to agree with the use of violence were less likely to exhibit physical aggression when exposed to direct violence vis-à-vis those who did not endorse militant or violent methods. This seemingly unnatural result has been analyzed with respect to the mechanisms of coping that individuals in contexts of protracted conflict use to safeguard their sense of self from the uncertain, unpredictable and threatening environment. It also points towards the role of political ideology and collective mobilization which can help in buffering the negative outcomes of conflict.

6

VIOLENCE, HOPE AND OPTIMISM

Can negative events have positive outcomes?

> They conspire so that someone, on the shores, awaits the ven-
> dor of flowers. And the other side of earth awaits Kashmir's
> sun, its message that water and fire are at peace
> > Agha Shahid Ali (Hussain, 2016)

While negative outcomes of long-drawn conflict have been a topic of study in psychological literature for some time, a much less explored theme is the relationship between violence exposure and positive cognitive and behavioural outcomes. Exposure to continued and severe violence can damage positive emotional resources that are essential to maintaining resilience, coping with the present and thinking and working towards a better future. Positive emotional and cognitive strategies include basic capacities of hope, optimism, resilience to stress, hardiness or tough-mindedness, adaptability and more. These distinct outcomes are important and much less explored when compared to existing literature on the effects of violence on aggression, anger, guilt, shame, humiliation and perceived injustice. Why is it important to examine the positive outcomes of violent events? There are several reasons—first the examination of how exposure to violence can impact positive resources can not only inform our understanding of conflict related behaviour but also help in designing appropriate policies and intervention. Positive emotions are distinct from negative emotions and require different methods of management. Interventions that target resilience building, reviving and strengthening hopeful attitudes and encouraging a positive future orientation, can help individuals to cope constructively with conflict situations. It is now an established fact that people can cope with difficult life situations and negative circumstances when they believe that the have something to look forward to. Second, there is growing evidence to support the idea that even in the face of extreme trauma, such as that produced by a situation of political conflict, communities and individuals continue to survive, function and construct their realities in a meaningful way (Sousa, Haj-Yahia, Feldman, & Lee, 2013). Irrespective

of the consistently high levels of distress found among populations living in conflict, there are a significant number of people who continue to live their lives and work towards achieving life goals. Comparing findings from different contexts reveals that on an average more than 60–70% of the population exposed to long-standing violence are not diagnosed with any negative health conditions. Additionally, significant sections remain outside political action or resistance and may never engage in violent and extremist movements. Most importantly, many survivors of trauma actively take up roles in peacebuilding, providing humanitarian aid and facilitating reconciliation with opposing groups. What drives these individuals, and how do they respond to the experience of violence?

Increasingly psychologists are pointing out the differences in the way people deal with traumatic life events. Bonanno (2004) presents a comprehensive account of findings from studies on bereavement as well as traumatic life events, like the 9/11 attacks in the United States, to highlight that resilient reactions to violent and distressing life events are not as uncommon as is usually assumed. Historically the emphasis on negative outcomes of stressful life events has resulted in neglect of a wider examination of other kinds of reactions to trauma. The author points out that people who exhibit behaviours that do not fall within the prescribed trajectory of grief or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been misunderstood. Positive emotions after a life-threatening event are often sidelined as a symptom of denial or a form of 'abnormal' and rare reaction. However, showing resilience and coping constructively with threatening situations is not at all exceptional. Substantial literature from bereavement studies, that is, of people who have lost a close relative or loved one to death and disease, supports the finding that not only do many of these individuals continue to function in unexpectedly resilient ways after the event, but coping positively increases long-term adjustment to such life events. This, along with the findings from populations exposed to extreme traumatic events, where large sections do not make the cut-off for a PTSD diagnosis or show extreme levels of distress, reiterates the need to look at positive resources and emotional outcomes of violence.

Several studies have also pointed to an increase in emotional resources and positive behavioural patterns following threatening life events. The concept of posttraumatic growth or PTG has become a cornerstone of this approach, with supporting findings across survivors and witnesses of different traumatic life events—from patients and caregivers of terminal illnesses to survivors of genocide and terrorist attacks. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) outlined the concept of PTG and emphasized that the growth could be experienced because of social support and interpersonal relations, an altered view of oneself and one's life, an appreciation for life, a renewed look at possibilities and spirituality or spiritual change. While a common understanding is that people who show resilience and growth in the aftermath of

a traumatic event have lower distress indicators, recent studies have found support for a positive association between distress and growth, indicating that in conditions of consistent violence, where the exposure to stressors is higher, there can be a simultaneous increase in positive coping and resilience rather than the inverse (Cadell, Regehr, & Hemsworth, 2003; Laufer & Solomon, 2006). Therefore experiencing repeated violence and distress does not necessarily mean a reduced capacity to deal with these situations in a positive and constructive way.

Vollhardt (2009) introduced a theoretical model for altruism born out of suffering, which she discussed in light of evidential literature on suffering, empathy, shared identity, constructive meaning making and associated pro-social and helping behaviour, often seen in the aftermath of violence. According to this line of thought, observations across contexts of mass violence and suffering have revealed the tendency of individuals to reach out and help others. This help or pro-social behaviour extends from consoling and sharing resources to protecting and providing shelter. Pro-social behaviour among victims and survivors has been reported in the aftermath of natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunami as well as man-made disasters like wars. The support for altruistic behaviour following experiences of violence is an important step towards a more dynamic understanding of ETV and related cognitive and affective outcomes. Similar findings strongly direct us to examine the positive emotions that may be appraised in situations of threat and violence, and how they interact with the experience of violence. This will not only add to our understanding of how individuals react to collective violence but also point towards significant resources for peacebuilding. The presence of resilience and the possibility of hope among communities affected by violence can present an important narrative outside the common negative mental health discourse around this topic.

Hope and optimism

One of the most common positive emotions spoken of in the context of conflict is that of hope. Hope is defined as the "perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder, 2002, p. 249). Hope combines the elements of expectation and agency. High-hopers develop a sense of achievement and motivation from positive outcomes of the past, which shows that hope is not unreasonable expectations but requires an element of fulfilment which can fuel it further (Lindner, 2006; Snyder, Lopez, & Pedrotti, 2011). The idea of 'constructive hope' is viewed to have the ability to overcome barriers created by feelings of hatred, anger and humiliation, and can become an instrumental pathway towards conflict resolution (Lindner, 2006). Snyder and Feldman (2000) also worked on the concept of *collective hope* that embodies a shared positive thinking towards a communal or collective goal

that benefits more than the individual. Collective hope has been explored in the areas of disarmament and is also relevant in the context of armed conflict. Bar-Tal, Halperin, and Rivera (2007) describe hope as a collective emotion that requires creative thinking and risk-taking. Hope can have the effect of mobilization and participation amongst group members when they perceive the possibility of changing a situation of deprivation. Most importantly an emotional climate of hope can re-instil trust and a shared motivation towards reconciliation. The authors emphasize the need to create an emotional climate of hope in contexts of intractable conflict, which can help in moving towards peace and resolution. Yet several studies also highlight that contexts of intractable conflict, because of their very nature, tend to result in high levels of fear and anger among the population. Bar-Tal (2001) has found that fear overrides hope as the primary emotional and cognitive orientation in these contexts. An orientation of fear automatically generates more violence in response to actual or symbolic terror, thus creating a vicious cycle of fear; freezing of other cognitive faculties; and violent reactions in anticipation of, and in defence against, the fearful situation. Therefore the overriding presence of the negative emotion of fear acts as a resistance to peace processes and attempts of reconciliation, and needs to be countered and replaced by hope for successful peacebuilding.

Optimism is another positive cognitive capacity that can be a source of coping with difficult life circumstances. Optimism is correlated with hope in that both these constructs allow people to think about the future, cope with the present and derive creative and constructive ways of dealing with difficulties (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009). Scheier and Carver (1985) view optimism as the general expectation of a positive future outcome. It is an inclination to expect that the future will bring more good things and fewer adversities. Tiger (1979, p. 18) defined optimism as "a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future- one which the evaluator regards as socially desirable, to his advantage or his pleasure". It involves self-regulated actions aimed at the achievement of personal goals. Scioli and colleagues (1997, p. 724) distinguished it from the concept of hope as "a cognitive construct consisting of a generalized belief in positive outcomes based on rational estimates of a person's likelihood of success". Hence optimism is a belief that when one is faced with difficult life situations or challenges, one will be able to overcome them and hence persevere in their efforts. Seligman (1991) and others have viewed optimism as an explanatory style in terms of causality. Optimists analyze and explain situations in fundamentally different ways from pessimists. Optimists tend to attribute negative situations to external temporary factors rather than to internal flaws or consistent uncontrollable conditions, which helps in maintaining a belief that the future can be different than the present. Optimism is closely related to other positive traits, like self-esteem and self-mastery, and negatively associated with anxiety and depression

(Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2001). Studies have revealed that an optimistic attitude can help in resisting postpartum depression, coping and recovery from traumatic experiences, and consequent medical conditions.

Optimism can be a stable personality trait as well as an attitude that is affected by the situation one is in. Kluemper, Little, and Degroot (2009, p. 211) propose that "Trait optimism represents stable individual differences in the level of optimism generally experienced, while state optimism captures the optimism that may change based on situation or contextual factors". Difficult life situations and violent environments can affect the levels of state optimism wherein the negativity of a lived reality may hinder the ability to think about the future optimistically. To focus on this assumed relationship, the present research specifically examined state optimism and its association with direct and collective exposure to violence.

Hope and optimism in intractable conflict

Suarez (2013) assessed the relationship between exposure to past violence, current life stressors, PSTD symptomatology and resilience among indigenous women in Peru in the aftermath of political violence. The findings did not show a significant inverse relationship between overall PTSD and resilience but a more intricate association with avoidance behaviour. The author concluded that among populations who are exposed to intense violence, individuals who are functioning in society, with a high level of resilience, could simultaneously make the cut off for PTSD symptoms. It is therefore imperative to dwell deeper and explore how the strengths of resilience and hope may be protecting against or equipping the individual to cope with daily life stresses, irrespective of traumatic experiences. Hope and optimism are concepts that revolve around the perception of, and expectations from, the future. These variables are thus closely associated not only with the actual incidence of violence exposure but also how individuals subjectively understand and make sense of trauma. This, in turn, affects their understanding of the current situation and their future attitudes and orientation. Lavi and Solomon (2005) attempted to understand these associations between trauma exposure, psychological symptomatology and future orientation among Palestinian youths through the double lens of objective exposure and subjective appraisal. As hypothesized, the findings pointed at a greater association between objective exposure and PTSD among those who perceived these situations subjectively as being more dangerous and threatening than among those who did not. The study also found that even though levels of objective exposure differed between two samples of youth, their subjective appraisal of danger was comparative, pointing at the possible role of group identification and a common sense of perceived threat and injustice that overrides the effect of direct exposure. Lastly, youth who were living in ongoing conflict, with repeated exposures to physical threat and

violence, were found to have a more negative future orientation. Negative future orientation can result from the perception of continued threat and the expectation (real or assumed) that the danger may reoccur.

There is a general tendency among many to exhibit something called 'unrealistic optimism', that is, that negative life-threatening events are less likely to occur. This was examined by Burger and Palmer (1992) through a quasi-experimental exploratory study on the experience of stressful events and generalized expectation through unrealistic optimism that survivors of such events may exhibit. University students who had witnessed the 1989 California earthquake were interviewed, and their responses were compared to those of the control group. Unrealistic optimism about being hurt in another natural disaster was not apparent immediately after the earthquake but became more prominent after three months. However the perceived vulnerability was limited to natural disasters. Thus being exposed to sudden and extreme disasters like an earthquake or a warlike situation and resulting violence can increase vulnerability temporarily, thereby decreasing the levels of optimism among people. Yet, with the passage of time, the perceived vulnerability may slowly be replaced by an optimistic attitude again. Nguyen-Gillham, Giacaman, Naser, and Boyce (2008) dug deeper into the concept of resilience and what could be the possible aspects of resilience among a population exposed to violence. The study brought up a few interesting points that are extremely relevant for the present research. First the authors found that the participants admitted to a mixed and often contradictory concept of coping and resilience in which narratives of normalization and optimism were mixed with boredom and limitations. Thus feelings of hope and optimism were intricately assorted with a sense of political commitment and direction, directly challenging a linear and simplistic idea about resilience and related constructs and their function in conflict. This points to how engagement with local politics, political resistance and collective action can instil a sense of hope and help in building resilience against the negative after-effects of violence. Most importantly the authors found that a large portion of the positive coping resources being appraised by the participants came from communal systems of support, like family and school, reiterating the important role played by interpersonal relationships and social support in appraising positive emotions.

Levine, Laufer, Stein, Hamama-Raz, and Solomon (2009) report that resilience, which they conceptualize as an umbrella construct including components of optimism, positive affect, hardiness and self enhancement, is inversely related to posttraumatic growth. The authors infer that because of the resistance posed by an individual's resilient nature, the effect of trauma or exposure to violence is not experienced as distressing enough to then warrant posttraumatic growth and positive coping. Therefore the authors suggest that instead of suppression and pathological coping, a certain perception of trauma when exposed to violence may be helpful in posttraumatic

growth. These findings are extremely significant in re-emphasizing the complex nature of experiencing violence, where cognitive and emotional resources can have many different and unpredictable paths to behaviour. It also becomes essential to question whether positive emotional resources that produce capacities for resilience, hope and optimism are less desirable given their buffering effect on posttraumatic growth. There is literature supporting both sides, with some claiming that it is indeed necessary to experience the distressing effects of trauma to grow from it and others who say that posttraumatic growth is often unreasonable, and resilience can be a more balancing state in response to trauma. Since the focus of the present work was on social-psychological factors beyond the trauma framework, it was more relevant to look at hope and optimism, and their relationship with ETV.

Another study that was more context specific in terms of focussing on exposure to political violence was undertaken by Lavi and Solomon in 2005; they found that the Palestinian adolescent sample showed more pessimism regarding their future when compared to an Israeli-Palestinian sample. The authors infer that the confrontation with more immediate and regular forms of violence is associated with a feeling of hopelessness about the future. Contrastingly, other studies with violence-exposed groups from the Middle East have revealed that collective and individual hope is significantly higher among the severely victimized Bedouin Arabs of Southern Israel, along with high levels of anger (Abu-Kaf, Braun-Lewensohn, & Kalagy, 2017). First this could potentially highlight a difference in the way that hope and optimism may be affected by violence and lead us to wonder if it is possible that while threatening situations more strongly and adversely affect the capacity to be optimistic, hope as a more intrinsic human inclination may continue to flourish. Second it reiterates that groups exposed to severe socio-political violence and exploitation continue to exhibit a sustained hopefulness, even when other negative emotional reactions to the violence (like anger) are simultaneously experienced. Surveys on youth perception of the armed conflict and peace movements have shown that the youth in Kashmir are significantly inclined towards positive peace initiatives and show a decreasing faith in and disengagement from the armed movement (Ali, 2012). Chaddha (2012) highlights that seventy-five percent of the youth chose peaceful protests as their preferred means of voicing grievances, and almost an equal number rejected the use of violence. Jan and Manzoor (2017) found that a vast majority of Kashmiri adolescents who responded to their survey on the conflict believed that normalcy would return to the Valley, indicating a positive future orientation. However, how the level of hope and optimism among Kashmiri youth is affected by their experiences of violence is an important and separate question. To answer this, the present research explored the relationship between exposure to direct and collective violent episodes and hope as well as state optimism.

Hope was measured with the help of the Integrative Hope Scale by Schrank, Woppmann, Sibitz and Lauber (2010), which has four dimensions: namely (i) Trust and confidence (I can see possibilities in the midst of difficulties), (ii) Interest and perspective (I am bothered by troubles that prevent my planning for the future), (c) Positive future orientation (There are things I want to do in life) and (d) Social relations and personal value (I have someone who shares my concerns). Optimism was measured with a modified version of the Life Orientation Test (Revised) by Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994), previously used by Kluemper, Little, and Degroot (2009) to study state optimism. In this version, the items are slightly modified, asking participants to think about their current state of being when answering. Both the measures used a 5-point scale for the responses, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The following sections present and discuss the findings and their implications.

Are Kashmiri youth hopeful and optimistic? Descriptive findings

To begin with it was interesting to examine the overall levels of hope and optimism among the participants. As has been discussed in Chapter 4, many of the participants in the present study had been exposed to severe and repeated incidents of direct and collective violence. Conversations with participants and others during the fieldwork often revealed a degree of help-lessness attached to the ongoing and seemingly irresolvable nature of the conflict. Yet many of the young participants expressed a sense of drive and direction, especially with regard to the resistance movement (Figure 6.1).
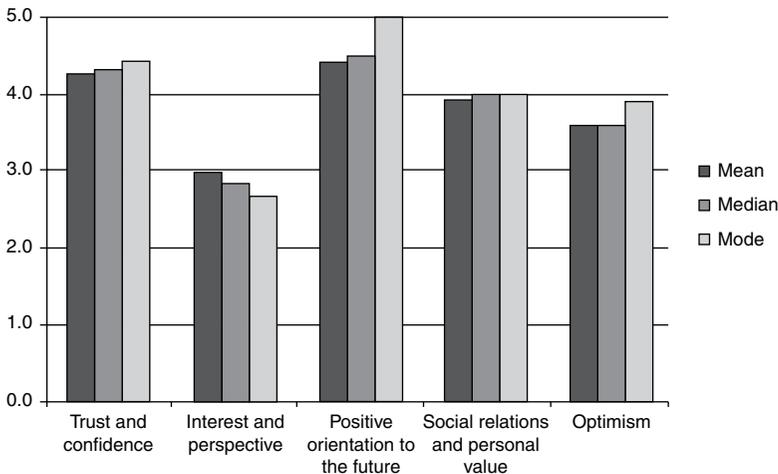
Figure 6.1 Mean, median and mode for all sub-scales of hope and optimism.
Source: Author

Comparing the average scores on hope and optimism we see that on average, most of the participants agreed with the statements measuring trust and confidence (70%) and were positively oriented to the future (74%). Trust and confidence reflected spiritual strength, goal-directed motivation and the belief in one's capability to overcome obstacles. Positive future orientation captured an active engagement with thinking about the future. Interest and perspective was the only dimension that participants generally scored low on, and the possible reasons for this will be discussed later. Participants also agreed to have an optimistic outlook towards the future, even when considering their present circumstances. However the scores for optimism were slightly lower than the dimensions of hope (except interest and perspective), indicating that while individuals garnered a stronger sense of hope, trust, confidence and possibility for a better future, when they put their expectations within the present context, it lowered the expected positive outcomes from the future. Yet the specifically high levels of hope are in line with some of the previous findings, which showed that exposure to trauma and violence may not drastically impact individual hope among people living in conflict.

Exposure to violence and hope

The only dimension of hope that showed a significant negative correlation with collective ETV was interest and perspective (Table 6.1). Optimism had a significant negative correlation with direct ETV and a stronger negative relationship with collective exposure. Thus the results for bivariate correlations highlight that an increase in collective ETV is related to a decrease in optimism and interest and perspective among the participants.

Direct and collective exposure to violence did not significantly predict any of the dimensions of hope for the current sample. The regression models with the sub-categories of exposure to violence were also not significant.

Table 6.1 Bivariate correlations between direct and collective ETV, hope and optimism (N = 160)

	Outcome variables	Direct exposure	Collective exposure
Hope	Trust and confidence	−.063	−.085
	Interest and perspective	−.075	−.189[*]
	Positive future orientation	−.119	−.103
	Social relations	−.145	−.099
Optimism		−.155[*]	−.250[**]

Source: Author
*is significant at 0.05 or p< 0.05 and **is significant at 0.01 or p<0.01-

This could be because of several methodological and sample limitations of the study. Given that a relatively new measure was used to examine multiple aspects of hope, and the available sample was limited, it is highly possible that the model was unable to capture any of the predicted paths. Second the construct of hope and how it may apply to a context of intractable conflict may require more detailed qualitative exploration. While the level of hope was very high among the participants, the relationship between how their experiences of violence relate to their sustained hope for a better future may be a more complex investigation.

Interest and perspective was the only dimensions of hope that was negatively correlated with collective exposure to violence. However regression analysis did not yield any significant results. This led to a deeper investigation of the particular nature of this dimensions vis-à-vis the others on the scale. The construct of interest and perspective represented a context-person interaction and focussed on the understanding of the present situation as negative or inadequate. It captured the way people were thinking about their present environment and how they looked towards the future, that is, with interest and direction or dejection and lack of perspective. The items for interest and perspective were also negatively framed, unlike any of the other dimensions of hope. For instance, 'I feel trapped, pinned down' and 'I am bothered by troubles that prevent my planning for the future' are thoughts that require the participant to acknowledge negative circumstantial factors and thereby bring in an element of the distressful environment as opposed to individual trust and expectations that the other dimensions capture. Lazarus (1999) highlights the situational aspect of hope as a fundamental condition that determines how individuals perceive their future with reference to their current context. Halperin, Bar-Tal, Nets-Zehngut, and Drori (2008) reiterate this point by describing hope as inclusive of the aspect of positive and active interest in cognitively engaging with plans for the future. Therefore a possible explanation of the unique way that interest and perspective seemed to be related to the other variables in this study is the simple fact that it is the only dimensions in the scale used that drove the participant to think about their external environment, specifically engaging with its negative and frustrating elements. This also emphasizes that examining hope in contexts of large-scale conflict may require a more inclusive understanding, capturing the situational, individual and collective aspects of life. Since the violence is viewed as a collective phenomenon, it may be more closely related to collective hope than to the dimensions included here, which are more individualistic.

Exposure to violence and optimism

The regression model with gender and direct and collective exposure to violence as predictors and optimism as the outcome variable was significant, $F_{(3,156)} = 2.791$, $p < 0.05$, but not very strong. It explained only

Table 6.2 Direct and collective exposure to violence, gender and optimism (N = 160)

Predictors	Beta	t-value	Significance level
Constant		32.893	.000
Gender	−.013	−.142	.887
Direct	−.002	−.020	.984
Collective	−.228	−2.330	.021
F = 2.791, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.051, Adjusted R^2 = 0.033			

Source: Author

about 3% of the differences in optimism and showed a significant association between collective exposure to violence and optimism (beta = −0.228, p < 0.05) (Table 6.2).

Therefore, for the current sample, collective exposure to violence significantly predicted optimism, where one point increase in collective ETV was associated with a 0.228 decrease in optimism, over and above the effects of gender and direct exposure to violence. None of the individual sub-categories of exposure to violence significantly predicted optimism. Witnessing collective violence, that is, shooting and explosions and witnessing violence on strangers, had the strongest relationship with optimism, though it was not significant (beta = −0.136, p > 0.05). Neither of the three dimensions of extremist mindset had a significant moderating effect on optimism.

Optimism is correlated with a number of positive outcomes, like health promotion, social connectedness and problem-solving behaviour (Carver et al., 2010). Those who move forward with optimistic views and perceptions tend to adjust and cope with difficult life situations significantly better than those who do not. The negative relationship between collective violence and optimism indicates that individuals, by living in a context of protracted conflict, without being directly exposed to severe events, can be increasingly less equipped to deal with situations in a positive and constructive way. The threatening environment and the collective experience of loss, fear and distress can lead to individual difficulties in problem-solving, future planning and social inclination. The relationship between an individual emotional and attitudinal outcome like optimism and collective exposure to violence emphasizes one of the main arguments of this book. It highlights the idea that beyond direct trauma and individual experiences, the collective experience of a violent environment can have particularly negative effects on individual health and behaviour. In any context, and more so in one that has multiple limitations because of protracted conflict, a personal sense of hope and optimism is largely dependent on a collective idea of hope and recovery from the adverse conditions of violence. Bar-Tal (2001) eloquently described how individuals who live in places affected by intractable conflict are constantly reminded of images of fear and

hostility, presented by the ongoing violence and resulting symbols of threat. According to the author, the collective memory and experiences of violence pre-condition people to view their situation and the environment as harmful, dangerous and untrustworthy. This results in a reduced likelihood of the appraisal of hope, which is a cognitive process that requires the visualization of the future and engagement in goal-directed behaviour related to optimism. Sousa and colleagues (2013) reviewed studies on resilience in political violence and found that individual resilience was highly intertwined with community resilience and dependent on factors like social support within the community, friendships, solidarity, shared ideology and the ability to form networks. Most, if not all, of these social psychological aspects of community life are affected by conflict, thereby having an associated impact on individual resilience and expectations for the future.

In Kashmir, the youth have had to face many challenges because of the omnipresent situation of conflict. Participants spoke about the difficulties of daily life faced during the militancy of the 1990s as well as the frequent periods of unrest thereafter. During those times curfew was often declared and forcefully maintained by paramilitary forces' closing down public offices, transport systems, schools and universities. Students were compelled to be on enforced house arrest for months, during which they were unable to step out at all. In the years after, curfew was declared multiple times, resulting in universities and other public institutions being shut for months. The economic condition has been in disarray since the time the conflict broke out, with high numbers of unemployed youth and a general lack in constructive and promising opportunities. The scenario of loss, damage and chaos that is represented through the experiences of collective violence may therefore be closely associated with how individuals evaluate their present environment and how they appraise ambitious and motivational thoughts. It is an important finding that points to the fact that positive resources of hope, optimism and resilience are embedded in the systems of support within the community, that is family, friends, neighbourhood and the community as a whole. Therefore experiencing violence against these may have a more detrimental effect on an individual's future perspective and interest in coping than his or her own personal encounters with violence. The significance of community networks and collective identity may be particularly strong in instilling and sustaining positive emotions during conflict, so much so that the relationship between violence exposure and optimism was not moderated by any of the mindset dimensions. This could also be a methodological limitation since the model for optimism was not very strong, and other moderating or mediating factors, like family support, may be more relevant to understanding optimism here. Moreover the research looked at state optimism specifically, which is only presumably more closely associated with context-specific factors like violence. However, it could mean

that optimism about the future and related interest in coping with difficult life situations are impacted more by situational factors like violence and perceived threat than the individual differences of mindset. Future research can try to gauge this characteristic of optimism by separating trait and state optimism to understand if and how the two may be related to separate factors, if at all, in a context of conflict.

Extremist mindset, ETV and hope

The next research question attempted to gauge the interaction effect between dimensions of mindset and ETV with respect to hope and optimism, and to assess whether any of the aspects of an extremist mindset moderated this relationship. Since there was no interaction effect on optimism, the focus here is on the moderating effect of belief in divine intervention on the relationship between ETV and interest and perspective (Table 6.3).

Collective exposure to violence and belief in divine power seem to be interacting in a significant way to influence the measure of interest and perspective among the participants. On testing the model it was found to be significant, $F_{(4,155)} = 2.794$, $p < 0.05$, and accounted for 7% of variance in interest and perspective. Collective exposure (coeff = –0.028, $p < 0.05$) and its interaction with the moderator (coeff = 0.046, $p < 0.05$) were both independently significant when controlling for gender. The R^2 change, due to the interaction effect, was 3%, and the conditional effect of the moderator was significant at the mean (effect = –0.028, $p < 0.01$) and -1SD (effect = –0.055, $p < 0.05$). The relationship between collective exposure to violence and interest and perspective was plotted at three levels of the moderator, that is, low representing –1SD, moderate representing mean and high representing +1SD. The negative relationship is strongest at low levels of belief in divine power and slowly declines at higher scores for this dimension. At high levels of the moderator, the relationship is almost stagnant, with a seemingly marginal increase in interest and perspective with increase in collective exposure to violence (Figure 6.2).

Table 6.3 Interaction effect of collective exposure and belief in divine power on interest and perspective

Predictors	Coefficient	t-value	Significance level
Constant	2.997	36.269	.000
Belief in divine power	.083	.776	.428
Collective exposure	–.028	–2.290	.023
Divine power * collective exposure	.046	2.158	.032
Gender	–.079	–.605	.546
F = 2.7940, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.067, R^2 change due to interaction = 0.028			

Source: Author
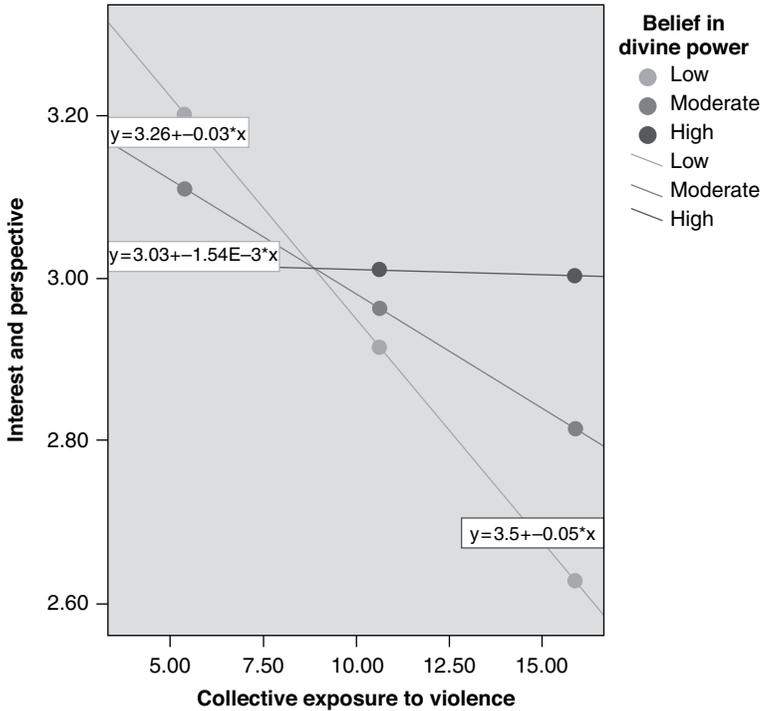
Figure 6.2 Interaction effect of belief in divine power and collective exposure to violence on interest and perspective.

Source: Author

According to the findings from the present data, when belief in divine power is low, collective exposure to violence was significantly and negatively associated with interest and perspective. This negative correlation was significant even at moderate levels of the interacting variable but ceased to be so at higher levels of the moderator. Here there was almost a negligible relationship between exposure to collective violence and interest and perspective. Belief in divine power in the current study covered ideas like intervention from God, who will help the in-group in their suffering, as well as how a higher authority sanctions the actions of the in-group. This aspect of an extremist mindset was more related to the in-group's perspective and identity than directed outwards that was represented in support for violence and idea of a vile world.

The role of belief in God or a higher power in providing meaning to and coping with violence has been found in various contexts of intergroup conflict (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005; Weine, Klebic,

Celic, & Bicic, 2009). The findings are in line with Laufer, Solomon and Levine's (2009) study with Israeli adolescents, which highlighted the importance of cultural worldviews like religiosity in mediating the relationship between exposure to violence and posttraumatic growth. The authors proposed that belief in cultural and religious ideas provides the individual with a sense of purpose and understanding, reduces the incomprehensibility of conflict and makes the fear manageable. Shah (2012) discussed the observable changes among Kashmiri youth, who have become more religious in their clothing, prayer and other ritualistic practices since the outbreak of conflict. She believes that religion and God have become a common source of solace and strength for a community that has faced considerable loss and violence. Updegraff and colleagues (2008) spoke about the need to find meaning and self-explanation in the aftermath of large-scale violence that is correlated with coping and distress. As religion and the idea of a higher authority often provide meaning and are used to make sense of certain experiences that seem unpredictable and out of control, belief in these can help in coping with the negative outcomes of exposure to violence. Kay and Eibach (2013) discuss this human tendency within the premises of lack of personal control over external conditions that seem random and uncertain, and the likelihood of placing confidence in an external source that is perceived to be powerful and as having the capacity to reduce the randomness. However, the authors posit that this element of external control helps to reduce uncertainty about the world in general, not just an individual's own goals and identity. Therefore, the current finding may present contradictory and important evidence that supports the idea that in a context of protracted conflict where personal goals and sense of identity are intertwined with the collective, belief in an external system of power can help to safeguard individual perceptions and attitudes about the present and future.

Religion, hope and extremism—some critical thoughts

The findings and related discussion around extremism, religious beliefs and conflict raise an important question in the context of Kashmir. In the Valley, there is a strong adherence to the religious thoughts and beliefs of Islam that was reiterated and often used as a point of reference by participants. It is deeply embedded in social life, language, rituals and political ideology. Whether the widespread and strong belief in a higher authority as promulgated within the tenets of Islam is associated and in some way a consequence of the conflict needs to be explored further. Future research can look at comparing beliefs in divine sanctions among Kashmiri youth and Muslim youth in other contexts to see if it significantly differs and may actually represent an extremist ideology. Nonetheless, the question

here is about addressing the meaning of a social psychological concept like religiosity and belief in divinity in a particular context. In a sociocultural context where religion and ideas about God are omnipresent in daily life, belief in divine power may not necessarily be an extremist mindset and may generally represent a collective ethos of the cultural way of life. This takes us back to some of the preliminary thoughts in the initial chapters of the book, which outlined the themes of contextual, cultural and decolonized psychological analysis. The scale used to measure extremist mindset is a Western construct, though it has been tested cross-culturally and was found to be reliable in the present context as well. Nonetheless it may have methodological limitations in light of the fact that many of the statements, particularly in this sub-scale, seemed to represent a general religious belief that does not necessarily capture extremism. Once again reiterating that 'extremist' values and attitudes are highly context specific and closely associated with cultural ways of life. Therefore to further understand the resilience derived from religious ideas in a place like Kashmir, a more qualitative and in-depth exploration of religious beliefs particular to the people and traditions of this region is required.

On the other hand, if strong adherence to belief in God and divine sanctions does represent an extremist ideology this points towards a pertinent debate surrounding the role of religion and related beliefs in the context of conflict. If the belief in divine power helps people to cope with experiences of violence in a way that protects their positive resources of hope and optimism, then religiosity and religious faith can potentially be a strong positive influence in protracted conflict and political violence. Yet fundamental and extreme adherence to religious beliefs has been viewed as a dividing force in the origin and maintenance of intergroup conflict (Borum, 2011; Seul, 1999). Here, the role of any societal belief, including that about God or a higher authority, has to be viewed within the context of ongoing conflict, violence, perceived threat and group-based differences. This very nature of intergroup conflict and the need to maintain in-group identity, solidarity and the belief in a common ideology can often distort social and cultural ideas to specific ends (Bar-Tal, 1998). The symbolic use of a divine power to advance a particular political ideology may make individuals more inflexible in their thought and negative in their out-group orientations, resulting in obstructions in the path towards reconciliation (Staub et al., 2005). Religious infusion, that is, the degree to which religion permeates in the social life of a community, has been found to enhance perceptions of incompatible values and thereby increase chances of intergroup conflict and aggression towards the out-group (Neuberg et al., 2014). Research has also shown that religion, and religiosity per se, does not singularly and directly predict support for violence. Instead it is psychological resource loss (breakdown of political and social systems of support), conditions of deprivation and disadvantage that determine if religiosity will lead to a pro-violent attitude (Canetti, Hobfoll,

Pedahzur, & Zaidise, 2011). Ongoing conflict and years of violence destroy social and psychological resources, creating a real and perceived sense of fear, discrimination and loss. This resource loss can become associated with a heightened sense of power and belief derived from a religious source, which may then be used to mobilize communities in conflict.

The Kashmiri narrative of struggle has witnessed a similar transformation from a secular inclusive ideology to a more radical and polarized identity, alienating certain sections of the Kashmiri population belonging to other religious groups (Akhter, 2012; Behera, 2006; Majumdar and Khan, 2017). While many believe that the conflict is fundamentally political, over the years religion has become closely intertwined with the Kashmiri identity and dominant political ideology, resulting in factional differences within religious and ethnic groups in the region. For instance, while culturally Sufi-Islamic practices have been recorded in most historical accounts of Kashmir, some younger Kashmiris dissociate from this tradition and believe in more radical mainstream Islamic practices. Like Bhat (2012), I observed similar manifestations of religious adherence during my fieldwork. Through a discussion with a Kashmiri friend I was informed that many women are willingly adopting the Burqa, even though it is not traditional Kashmiri attire.

Thus the role of religion and religious beliefs in a context of long-drawn conflict is complex, contradictory and significant. While on the one hand it is seen as an essential radicalizing and dividing force, it can also act as a crucial positive and protective resource in coping with violence. This not only calls for further research on the role of religiosity in conflict but also highlights how it can be used as a facilitative factor in restoration, recovery and peacebuilding. Religious organizations have been active in several communities affected by violence to reconcile warring groups and reduce chances of further conflict (Haynes, 2009). Abu-Nimer (2001) proposed the importance of interreligious peacebuilding wherein constructive values within religions are shared and emphasized to create channels of communication and inclusive action between groups. These training workshops focus on identified religious values, like forgiveness, non-violence, patience, trust and tolerance, that can foster cross-communal acceptance and open paths to reconciliation. Lewis (2013) presents an interesting narrative of violence, coping and religiosity among Tibetan refugees in India, many of whom were tortured and detained in Chinese prisons. The strikingly low level of psychological distress among this group has been attributed to the strong Buddhist traditions of thought that prevail in this community. This study shows how the role of religion can be dualistic yet not conflicting. Tibetan refugees are actively engaged in humanitarian work, resistance and protest while at the same time believing strongly in not holding on to memories of pain and anger. Thus even when religion is closely associated with the struggle, it is simultaneously one of the strongest sources of coping and moving beyond the effects of violent experiences.

Summary

A situation of protracted conflict is related not only to negative emotional and behavioural outcomes but also to positive human capacities like hope and optimism. Exploring how exposure to conflict related violence may predict the resources of hope and optimism is important in the understanding of the various ways that violence affects human society. The research revealed interesting, though limited, results on this theme. First, while ETV did not significantly predict any of the dimensions of hope, collective exposure had a significant correlation with interest and perspective. There was also a significant interaction effect between collective ETV and belief in divine power on interest and perspective, wherein at higher levels of belief in divine power the negative relationship between exposure to violence and interest and perspective decreased to a marginal level. Finally collective exposure to violence significantly predicted decrease in optimism, though the relationship was not very strong. The findings were discussed with reference to the complex social and psychological networks that sustain positive emotions in conflict, particularly the role of religiosity and religious belief, which has an essential place in the narrative on exposure to political violence, extremist mindset and hope.

7

BEYOND VIOLENCE
Conclusions and thoughts

> Current patterns of national, ethnic, and/or religious
> disharmony make clear that the world's punctuated history
> of violence is not dissipating but, as many would argue, es-
> calating in terms of scope and lethality. Regrettably, there is
> thus much opportunity and need to understand how expo-
> sure to and involvement in political conflict impact human
> experience
>
> (Barber, 2009)

This book was an attempt to present a social psychological account of youth experiences related to political violence and how they shape emotions and behaviour. The social psychological focus on protracted conflict, though relatively new and growing, has become extremely important in the overall discourse on conflict resolution and transformation. To further expand the scope of work, the focus here was on youth in the Kashmir Valley, a disputed territory with a long and continuous history of destructive conflict.

I visited Kashmir for the first time with family and friends when I was about 22 years of age. That vacation was all about houseboats and snowfall, and like any other first visitor I was completely overwhelmed by the visual scenery. The next time I went was for my first round of fieldwork in the summer of 2012. In the initial days in Srinagar, I was a returning tourist, still mesmerized by the beauty of the land and humbled by the hospitality of my hosts. Yet I had a very different purpose to my visit this time and was waiting to embark on that journey. With time and over many meals and conversations I was slowly made aware of the memories of violence that are omnipresent under a thin layer of seemingly regular life. Corroborating my own statistical findings were the exchanges I had with my hosts, who spoke about family members and friends who had been picked up (disappeared is the term used in Kashmir) or tortured over the years. Everyone I met had either been victimized themselves or knew someone who had been directly harmed by the violence, and everyone was a witness. But what is the

significance of experiencing violence? And why is it important to identify those invisible ways in which violence affects us that can stay unidentified by medical diagnostic criteria? A little anecdote may answer this: It was after Diwali, in the year 2011, when I was doing my PhD in Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. I met my friend, who was a Kashmiri and my batch mate, for a cup of tea at the canteen. At that point I had very little idea and imagination of what living in protracted conflict could entail. I asked her if she had enjoyed the Diwali break and related festivities since the campus and the city was lit up with decorative lights and fireworks. To my absolute surprise and ignorance, she replied that fireworks were not very pleasant as they reminded her of sounds of bombing and often caused anxiety and restlessness. Yes, I was aware of PTSD symptoms among soldiers who are triggered by loud sounds, but I could not fathom that someone I know, without apparent symptoms of any condition, could also experience this feeling. This very short and utterly significant exchange made me think about the range of emotions that are felt and modified by exposure to large-scale violence. Therefore my own research over the following years was conceptualized to explore the relationship between exposure to violence and socio psychological variables of emotion and behaviour among youth living in ongoing protracted conflict. The findings point towards new directions in research, intervention and policy that may have important implications for long-term health and recovery.

The book presents a theoretical standpoint that is critical of a purely PTSD based psychiatric framework, and one of its main objectives was to highlight the complex psychosocial factors that influence mental health variables in a context like that of Kashmir. The aim to draw attention to emotional, cognitive and behavioural variables, and their relationships in a context of conflict has to a large extent been achieved through some of the main findings of the research, which point out the significance of collective violence, interrelationships between extremist ideas and emotion regulation processes as well as the association between positive emotions and exposure to violence. Therefore, it may be inferred that simplistic diagnostic tools and intervention strategies that follow a narrow framework of trauma exposure and resulting posttraumatic health are not adequate enough to explain what the youth are experiencing as well as what may be done to enhance their present condition and create constructive opportunities for the future. Supplementing clinical work with more non-clinical social psychological assistance could help to directly and indirectly address deep-seated emotions of anger, fear and lack of trust, and thereby create conditions that would allow individuals to feel safe and heard.

The findings re-emphasized the role of collective exposure to violence as an important aspect of youth's interaction with a violent environment. Collective exposure to violence was correlated with and predicted some of the main outcome variables included in the study, pointing to the essential

place that witnessing violence may hold in a condition of ongoing conflict. The findings point towards the importance of community, family and friendships in the lives of individuals and how personal emotions and behaviour are associated with the welfare of these social groups. Extending the discussion on the important role of collective violence in the context of Kashmir, one of the most important manifestations of the ongoing violence is the extreme militarization of public spaces. The presence of symbols of violence and oppression represented by the occupation of spaces by the armed forces contributes to an omnipresent perception of collective violence (Amin & Khan, 2009; Duschinski, 2009). Walking down any of the main roads around the Dal lake one is intimidated by the overbearing presence of military camps and holdouts. The image of militarized spaces is common to conflict regions around the world, including Palestine, Syria and several areas in the north-eastern states of India. The challenge to civilian life as a result of militarization extends from the lack of recreational spaces to the constant threat of interrogation and misunderstanding. It therefore adds significantly to a sense of perceived threat and the lack of safety that is almost natural in any other part of the world. As indicated by the results, this consistent threat can adversely affect optimistic attitudes among the youth and increase chances of aggressive behaviour among men. From a research point of view future studies need to explore this link between militarization, perceptions of collective violence and resulting anger as well as attitudes towards reconciliation and future orientation. For public policy and conflict resolution, it is important to attend to the situation of perceived threat and collective violence that militarization has created in the Valley. Perceived threat is a huge block in the path of reconciliation (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Kelman, 2008; Stephan, 2008), and necessary steps to control it are essential in recovery and transformation from conflict. While the question on the need for military presence is a separate (albeit important) debate, from a social psychological perspective what is important is how, irrespective of militarization, the people of the region can be assured of a sense of security, dignity and confidence in justice mechanisms. If threatening images constantly reinforce emotions of fear and anger, it is unlikely that the community will be able to overcome its insecurities and look towards positive change.

The significant role of mindset calls for attention to the role of individual beliefs, perceptions and attitudes in a context of conflict. As Barber (2009a) points out, to understand youth's engagement, attitudes and expectations in an environment of struggle and violence, it is indeed necessary to look at mediating and moderating variables of political ideology, mindset, social support and group identity that give meaning to youth's narratives. This approach emphasizes the active participation of the individual at every step in the process of violence exposure and consequent behavioural outcome. Although it can be debated that individual mindset

and attitudes in a context of conflict are not completely free of collective influences that stem from an identity of victimization and suffering, the fact that individuals differ in the degree to which they adopt, endorse and perpetuate the same ideologies is of primary importance. Mindset is not only a dynamic entity—it is influenced by a collective of factors that can be controlled, modified and moderated with the right kind of intervention. This may, therefore, be good news for policy makers and organizations working in conflict situations who need to move beyond the idea of mental health assistance to more inclusive and holistic programmes, and initiatives that invite youth to engage with themes that are relevant to them. During my fieldwork in Kashmir, i consistently observed that the most important and immediate concern for the young participants was that they wanted their voices to be heard. It is a need for agency that has become increasingly important to the collective identity of the people in Kashmir, and is in a way symbolized by the struggle for self-determination. Forums where ideas about the conflict, experiences of violence and everyday life in those situations, sociocultural and political alternatives to violence are discussed and critically engaged with, will provide pathways to question and review what the youth are thinking. Various peacebuilding workshops have been successfully able to create communication channels for youth from conflict zones that facilitate sharing of narratives, venting of anger, listening to others, understanding inclusive victimhood and exploring alternate paths to reconciliation. Social psychologists are using creative methods to address specific emotions that are altered by conflict and replace negative, exclusive attitudes with positive, inclusive ones. While pertinent questions regarding the dangers of revisiting traumatic memories, the willingness and extent of forgiveness and coexistence, the efficiency of truth and reconciliation forums have been raised, several accounts document the ability of these methods to create possibilities for transformation. Most importantly they highlight that the change comes from narratives of people, from the needs, experiences and motivations of the communities that have been exposed to violence. Kelman (2008, p. 25) believes that "new attitudes can not only develop alongside old attitudes, but in place of the latter", emphasizing that attitude shift and the formation of a more positive and inclusive mindset that is bent towards reconciliation and away from violence can be possible.

Three dimensions of an extremist mindset were included to explore how these ideas influence the relationship between an external situation of violence and individual behavioural and emotional outcomes. The resulting significant moderating effects point towards the need to explore aspects of extremism and related variables in a context of conflict. This is important because extremism and what it essentially implies is often clouded by its various representations in the media and in people's imagination. There is a dearth of organized and focussed enquiry into aspects of extremist attitudes that take shape in the difficult situations of protracted conflict

and may, in turn, influence populations living in these conditions. What is more evidently required is a cross-cultural frame to understand radical and conformist thought in protracted conflict, to capture the cultural and context specific aspects of extremism. For instance, while support for violence was generally an unpopular category of extremist thought in Kashmir, belief in divine intervention and an idea of a vile world were more common. This emphasizes the basic idea that because protracted conflicts are so cultural and context specific in nature, the emotions and thought processes of groups and individuals will also depend largely on existing cultural and social norms (Barber, 2009a; Coleman, 2006; Staub, 2006; Wessells, 2007). This encourages us to question how aspects of mindset and concepts about the word and belief in a higher power are essential elements in the discourse around conflict, extremism, mental health and recovery. Whether these dimensions, which may be viewed as 'extremist' in certain contexts, have similar meaning in others can be addressed for a more culturally grounded understanding of war and violence. Moreover, some of the dimensions may in fact prove to be functional, positive coping mechanisms in specific contexts, as seen with respect to the divine power dimension and its relation to hope in the current study. This reiterates the need to be unbiased in our understanding of ideas related to identity, religion and violence, which can have multiple meanings and manifestations. Therefore, research on radicalism, fundamentalism, prejudice, extremism, violence and reconciliation must give due importance to the place, the people and their histories.

Exploring the multiple channels by which individuals interact with their violent environments is also important to shedding light on narrative making in conflict. One major reflection of this was the discussion on gendered experiences of violence, highlighting specific experiences of women in conflict that are different and sometimes contradictory to those of men. A qualitative exploration revealed many nuanced ways in which years of violence have affected freedom and choices among Kashmiri women (Khan & Majumdar, 2017). When we examine exposure to violence with a linear lens, the obvious results reveal that significantly more men have been exposed to direct violence. This could result in the inaccurate inference that men in general are more affected by the violence than women. However, expanding this lens would reveal that women have suffered in specific ways: for instance, because of the fear of sexual violence, which, in turn, has placed restrictions on their freedom of movement (not going out after sunset). These differences prevail across region, location and socio-economic status. For example, due to the uncertain conditions in the Valley, many students choose to leave and pursue their higher education outside Kashmir. There is a notable representation of Kashmiri students in universities across India and abroad. Yet the resources to afford an education anywhere else are limited to certain sections of the population, while

others are restricted in their choices. Continuing to study in Kashmir comes with its own unpredictability, wherein curfews and the threat of war can derail plans for indefinite periods.

Narrative building is particularly relevant to conflict situations given the high tendency of people to adhere to what is called the 'dominant or master narrative". The significance of collective identity has been emphasized throughout this book, and its capacity to influence individual motivation, emotions and beliefs is now well known. Shared identities are prevalent everywhere but particularly strong in conflict situations where the experiences of collective violence create a sense of shared victimhood. Added to this is the constant threat from an external enemy, and in most cases there is active mobilization, resistance and political participation. A consequence of these social and political forces is the formation, maintenance and polarization of a master narrative of suffering and resistance. Adhering to this narrative can give people a sense of purpose and make them feel closer to their group's identity. There is ample evidence from social psychological literature to support the prominence of linear narrative making and the marginalization of alternate narratives among youth in protracted conflict (Hammack, 2011; Recchia & Wainryb, 2011). What this basically implies is that youth living in conflict can often reiterate a singular narrative that homogenizes the stories of individual experiences. The marginalization of alternate narratives can lead to a limited and non-representative understanding of the experiences of violence. Thus, accounting for differences based on gender, location, religion, positioning and other demographic as well as ideological differences and individual mindset and attitude dimensions can lead to a more inclusive and informed discussion on conflict experiences. Mainstream media also encourages the homogenization of experiences and the retelling of the master narrative. This can lead to misinformation and mis-positioning, even as a researcher. A chance meeting with a Kashmiri woman on the last day of my fieldwork jolted me into this realization. She was not a participant, but a conversation on the themes of my research led her to share her own memories and experiences of living and growing up in Kashmir. She was an older, educated woman belonging to a minority group in Kashmir, and her narrative was at once challenging (to the dominant narrative that had come through from most of the other responses) while also complementing the other findings. It helped me to reflect on why a large number of youth seemed to convey a similar message and what kind of differences (socio-economic, regional and otherwise) would moderate that. Thus, grounded theory and similar qualitative work that draws from a more diverse field and delves into the meaning of the experiences of violence, perceptions and mindset could highlight new information and inform further theorizing on conflict experiences.

Lastly and most importantly, the findings emphasize the debilitating effects of violence exposure on important aspects of youth's affective and

cognitive faculties (aggression, hope, emotions), which determine how and in what ways these significant members of a population will act and react. Violence and traumatic experiences in political conflicts not only push people towards mental health conditions of anxiety and depression but also affect everyday emotions as well as long-term orientations—towards the self, the other and society in general. This more intrinsic and complex manifestations of the experience of violence may be more damaging in the long run, transferring onto post-conflict societies (McCouch, 2009). Hence conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Kashmir and beyond needs to take into account reports of similar socio-emotional and psychosocial elements that should guide policy and intervention, along with political and economic reconstruction. Macro-policy and political decisions have to engage with the community and the differences within to help in the process of reconciliation: for instance, a special focus on women's narratives around shame and guilt, and other emotions that could be feeding into depression and distress, or positive resources, like hope, that continue to thrive in these difficult situations. The high levels of reported hope and optimism hold witness to the fact that youth resiliently cope with violence and continue to hope for a constructive future. Denying the young safe spaces for communication, expression and dialogue can alienate and frustrate them further in an already threatening and oppressive environment. Instead the existing repertoire of positive emotions can be strengthened and encouraged for peacebuilding.

While the focus of this book was on the Kashmir Valley, the entire region of South Asia, and India specifically, has witnessed several outbreaks of ethno-political conflict in recent years. Many of these conflicts are ongoing, while other regions are recovering from the destruction of past violence. It has therefore become a need of the moment to expand psychological assistance and investigation into the socio-political realm. By presenting the findings from a specific locale the intention is not to limit the implications of the findings but instead to encourage similar enquiries and more engaged psychological work on violent conflicts across the region. Most importantly, not only is the study a step towards a more integrated approach to research on conflict areas in India, but it hopes to get attention from policy makers and other stakeholders who are working on issues of conflict resolution and reconciliation among populations caught in intractable conflict. The need to account for and understand the role of emotions, attitudes, beliefs and resilience is imperative for any successful conflict resolution strategy and reconciliation policy, which have often failed because of their lack of attention to what and how individual and group actors who are affected by the conflict are thinking and feeling.

There are a few wonderful and dedicated individuals and organizations that are working with people in Kashmir and other violence affected communities. They possess a rich source of information and experience that can guide mental health assistance and policy-based interventions.

It is important that stakeholders from these different sectors come together to contribute and learn in the process of creating a relevant, well-researched, field informed guideline for youth affected by political conflict and related violence. We can hope that this book, along with many other academic, policy and opinions pieces, will be one step towards this desirable direction.

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