Article

Identities in Conflict: A Comparison of Drawings of Muslim Adolescents in Kashmir and Delhi

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Abstract

Kashmir has witnessed violent conflict for many years, and India has been one of the main players in this conflict. This study used the method of drawings to assess how this ongoing conflict has shaped the identities of young Muslims in Kashmir. The identities they expressed were compared with those expressed by young Muslims in Delhi. At each location, one group of participants was asked to draw on the theme "Me and my country" while the other group was asked to draw whatever they desired. When allowed to draw what they wished, adolescents in Kashmir drew symbols of regional identity more often and symbols of India less often than adolescents in Delhi. "I dominant" identities were depicted only by the Delhi-based sample. Drawings from Kashmir did not represent high levels of violence or a fractured relationship with the Indian state. Possible reasons have been discussed.

Keywords

Kashmir, adolescent, Muslim, conflict, identity

India is a land of diverse ethnicities, cultures, and religions. The north Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir[1] stands unique not only in terms of its beauty but also for being the only state with a Muslim majority (Dabla, 2011) in an otherwise predominantly Hindu country. Kashmir has witnessed chronic conflict and the gross violation of human rights for several decades. Expectedly, the violence experienced by the Kashmiri people has generated deep fears for their own safety and the safety of their loved ones. A ubiquitous fear is of family members not returning alive upon leaving home in the morning (Husain, 2002). In fact, years of violence have created a large number of "half-widows"—women whose husbands seem to have disappeared but are not declared dead. The impact of the conflict on mental health has been direct and grave. Psychological distress and specific psychological disorders are common in populations residing in Kashmir (Altaf, 2012; De Jong et al., 2006) with young people quite often being the most adversely effected (Amin & Khan, 2009). In relation to long-drawn social conflicts like that of Kashmir, identity is an undeniably universal need, the thwarting of which causes as well as perpetuates conflict (Fisher, 1990). The study of intergroup relations led Sherif and Sherif (1953) to recognize that people in the throes of violence form their identities around the conflict. In turn, how adversaries think about who they are and who their enemies are, profoundly influences the course of the conflict between them (Kriesberg, 2003). Yet, there has been little

work relating conflict and identity in the context of Kashmir. In this study, we have attempted to gain insight into the identities of adolescents growing up in Kashmir and understand these in relation to the violence the Valley has long endured. We studied the role of conflict by comparing the representations provided by Kashmiris to those provided by Muslim adolescents in Delhi, an area which has remained relatively free of prolonged violent conflict, at least for the past 30 years.

We would like to clarify at the very outset that the data in Kashmir were collected from schools run by the Indian army, and therefore the findings of the study are applicable to these settings only. We do not claim that the findings of the present study can be generalized to other adolescents in the Valley. We are extremely aware that the Indian army offers one of many possible narratives regarding the events that have happened in Kashmir. The army's representation of itself and the Indian state as benevolent and protectionist in its attitudes toward the people of Kashmir are likely to penetrate all its efforts in the Valley, including the running of its schools. Although accepted by some, this hegemonic narrative has

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not tended to match popular sentiment in Kashmir. Neither has this narrative been able to erase the many other narratives that emanate from Kashmir and duly demand recognition. The results of the study must be understood keeping these facts foremost in mind.

A Historical Overview of Kashmir and the Role of India

Although a significant proportion of the population in Indian-administered Kashmir is Muslim, it has been home to sizable Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist populations. Kashmir is thus best understood as multireligious and multilingual. Kashmir's history shows it to have been a great center for Buddhist and Brahminical art in ancient times (Malla, 1996). Several well-known Sanskrit scholars were from the Valley, and Kashmir is regarded as the birthplace of the Hindu sect "Kashmiri Shaivism" devoted to Lord Shiva. Centuries of Hindu rule ended in 1339 when Shah Mir, a Muslim adventurer who had acquired substantial political power, seized the throne (Reddy, 2007). In later centuries, Kashmir came to be ruled by the Mughals followed by brief periods of Afghan and Sikh domination. Eventually in 1846, Kashmir became part of the Hindu Dogra kingdom when Maharaja Gulab Singh signed the Treaty of Amritsar with the British. Kashmir remained part of the Dogra kingdom for the next 100 years.

The present crisis in Kashmir began immediately after the Indian subcontinent gained independence from British rule in 1947 and was partitioned into two nations—India and Pakistan. After independence, the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, descendent of Gulab Singh, refused to accede to either India or Pakistan. Soon rebels from Pakistan invaded Kashmir. The Maharaja appealed to the Indian government for assistance which agreed to help on the condition that the ruler accedes to India (Ganguly, 2010). Once this was accomplished, Indian soldiers entered Kashmir, halted the rebels, and captured a part of the state. In 1948, India sought a resolution of the Kashmir conflict at the United Nations. Following difficult and prolonged negotiations, both countries agreed to a formal cease fire. Its terms required Pakistan to withdraw its regular and irregular forces while allowing India to maintain some forces in Kashmir. On compliance with these conditions, a plebiscite was to be held to ascertain the future of the Kashmiri people (Lyon, 2008), although it was never actually conducted. Relations between India and Pakistan remained strained, and three more wars followed in 1965, 1971, and 1999.

According to James and Ozdamar (2005), analyses of the origins of the Kashmir dispute predominantly reveal that both countries claimed Kashmir because of their nation-building strategies. Kashmir symbolized each country's concept of a national identity (Schaffer, 2009). For the newly independent India, the possibility of a Muslim majority in Kashmir choosing a primarily Hindu State was a symbol of its secular identity. However, for Pakistan, the primary

characteristic of its existence was Islam. Therefore, Kashmir and its Muslim citizens had to be part of an Islamic homeland. Even today, tensions between India and Pakistan remain high, and the Kashmir dispute has come to be regarded as the *oldest* unresolved international conflict in the world.

The Insurgency

The mid- to late 1980s also saw the beginnings of insurgency in Kashmir marked by intense bloodshed. Since its inception, the insurgency has claimed more than 50,000 lives and has led to the displacement of more than 200,000 Kashmiri Hindu Pandits. Clearly, the issues of religious and national identity assumed great significance in the context of this insurgency (Wani, 2012), which itself has been traced to several causes. Dissatisfaction with governance by the Indian state is considered to be one of the main causes for the rise of the Kashmiri insurgency (Ganguly & Kapur, 2012). However, the Indian state maintains that the conflict is a result of orchestrations by Pakistan to destabilize India. Pakistan argues that the Kashmir conflict is an ongoing freedom struggle of Kashmiri Muslims against Indian occupying forces. To reign in the insurgents, large numbers of paramilitary forces and the Indian army were and continue to be deployed in Indian-administered Kashmir. These forces have been granted sweeping powers to use lethal force to quash civil unrest. They have also been awarded protection from prosecution for acts committed in the discharge of duty. One of the main facilitators of impunity for the security forces is the much debated Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1990. According to an Amnesty International (2015) report released in 2015, the law continues to feed a cycle of impunity for human rights violations, 25 years after its introduction. With the enforcement of legal provisions like AFSPA, access to legal remedies for victims of human rights transgressions and their families remains extremely limited. Accusations of crimes, including rape, mass killings, forced disappearances, and torture against Indian Army personnel, have rarely been investigated in the past (Goldston, Gossman, & The Asia Watch Committee, 1991), and many grievances still remain. Several civil society organizations have demanded the removal of such powers and the withdrawal of Indian troops. Yet, the Indian army maintains that "legal protection" is a must for the troops to efficiently perform their tasks in a situation like that of Kashmir (Singh, 2011).

Diverging Narratives

Years of violence in Kashmir have produced many narratives around the conflict. Fazili (2011) discusses how the Indian state legitimizes its control over Kashmir through the use of different moments in Kashmir's history, elections held, wars won, subsidies given, and development achieved. Sharply

contradicting this stance of "progress" are narratives of the Kashmiri people. Although the sense of alienation experienced by the Kashmiris is neglected in the narrative of the Indian state, it remains central to the narratives of people in Kashmir. For the majority of armed forces present in the Valley, Kashmiris are probable terrorists who deserve to be incarcerated if not eliminated. In the name of creating security, homes can be searched, vehicles stopped and people detained without explanation. Fazili points out that these experiences do not differ very significantly among different segments of the Kashmiri population and thus strengthen a collective marginalized identity. Dominant discourses by the Indian state deny Kashmiri people the capacity for autonomous political behavior, seemingly forgetting a rich history of struggles in Kashmir that preceded accession in 1947. The Kashmiri discourses are very much about these political struggles. Refuting the claim that the accession of Kashmir to India was legitimate, the Kashmiriyat narrative avers that the accession was provisional and could have only continued if the Indian government's commitment to secularism, democracy, and allowance for Kashmir's management of its own affairs had remained undamaged (Ciment & Hill, 1999). The disruption of democracy within Kashmir is apparent on many fronts. Kazi (2009) explains that democracy in Kashmir would be synonymous with the restoration of *full* citizenship rights for Kashmiris, including freeing civilians from harassment by police and the army, the revocation of tyrannical legislations, the end of unlawful killings, the protection of civil rights, and creating public accountability for Kashmir's human rights tragedies. These circumstances do not exist presently. There is thus a basic contradiction in the policy of the Indian state with regard to Kashmir: promoting democracy while practicing occupation (Fazili, 2011). Kak (2011) states that the demand for self-determination by the Kashmiris predates the Partition of the country by at least a decade and has been a part of public discourse ever since. However, he says, the political demand for freedom or *azaadi* has been buried under the oversimplification of the Kashmiri problem as an India–Pakistan issue. Furthermore, Kashmiri people have suffered great losses at the hands of the insurgents, and the perceived inability of the Indian government to protect the people from both its own troops and the insurgency has eroded support for the Indian government.

Among the various voices, the narratives of Kashmiri women are striking and also challenge the account of the Indian state. Majumdar and Khan (2014) in their interaction with Kashmiri women find a sense of frustration related to the limitation of movement and choice in a highly militarized environment. Witnessing violence on others (mainly men) was frequently reported and was seen to be directly connected to "mental torture." This confinement is not just in the physical sense. N. Khan (2010) points out that the free hand provided to the Indian military, Pakistani sponsorship of terrorism and India's repression of demands for autonomy, and the disregard for democratic institutions create a situation in which women appear psychologically incarcerated. Amid strong accusations and objections, the army has begun many efforts in recent years to mend its reputation in the Kashmir Valley. These efforts to win back the trust of the Kashmiri people have been elaborated on later in the article.

The Present Study

Sherif and Sherif (1953) observe that the greater the level of intergroup conflict, the greater the level of intragroup solidarity. When groups are in conflict, their members are placed under great pressure to conform with the values and practices of the in-group. In this situation, where the Indian government and its army have been seen as opposing the interests of the Kashmiri people, one may expect a strengthening of the identification with their own threatened group and a weakened identification with the Indian state, that is, the outgroup. It is believed that the perceived lack of integration with the Indian nation has steadily contributed to the Kashmiri identity becoming synonymous with the Kashmiri Muslim identity (Blom, 2007; Rao, 1999). Increased social identification with one's own group has been found to alleviate some of the negative effects of the perceived threat posed by the out-group (Schmid & Muldoon, 2015).

Although the present conflict is likely to have increased the need to identify with the in-group, the people of Kashmir have faced incursions from non-Kashmiris for several centuries. Wani (2012) describes Kashmiri identity as having been resistant to these and to the politics through which other states were integrated into the Indian nation in 1947. It is this enduring perception of a distinct Kashmiri identity that seems to have contributed to Kashmiri demands for a separate nationhood (Thomas, 2001). Based on these findings, we hypothesized that adolescents in Kashmir would identify strongly with their own group and region. However, identification with India as a nation would be far less salient. Also based on Elbedour, Bastien, and Center's (1997) findings that children raised in conflict settings identify most with it, while the children raised in relative peace depict individualized personal identities, we believed that the drawings in Delhi would portray "I dominant" identities more often than those in Kashmir.

This study uses the method of drawings to reveal the identities of the young people of Kashmir and compare them with those in Delhi. Artistic expression offers a nonverbal way to bypass words which are not always easy to find when trying to describe one's identity (Beauregard, 2013). Tovey (2010) suggests that drawing when it combines everyday experiences with imagination, also offers an authoring space for the self. Young people can use drawing to make sense of the world (Matthews, 2003) and also create worlds and cultures of their own (Thompson, 1999). These worlds and cultures are spaces within which they can author, construct, and play with identities. Identities that are constructed by children and adolescents are bound to be influenced by the social contexts

Table 1. Categories Emerging From the Drawings.

		Theme		No theme	
		Delhi (n = 94)	Kashmir (n = 90)	Delhi (n = 79)	Kashmir (n = 58)
Category	Description of category	%	%	%	%
National identity	Drawings related to the Indian state	51	45.5	15.2	3.4
Region identity	Drawings symbolizing one's region	8.5	14.4	3.8	19
Personal identity	Drawings representing the individual self	5.3	Nil	17.7	Nil
Violence	Drawings related to war/violence/crime	3.2	4.4	2.5	3.4
Environment	Drawings related to environmental conservation or depictions of nature	16	18.9	36.7	58.6
Social awareness	Drawings of social issues such as crime and poverty	10.6	10	3.8	10.3
Science	Drawings of objects or concepts related to science	Nil	Nil	12.7	Nil
Miscellaneous	Any other	5.31	6.67	7.6	5.2

in which they live given that drawings are engagements with the social constructions of identities rather than free acts of expressions (Hawkins, 2002).

Method

Sample

The data for the study were collected from 321 Muslim adolescents studying in Grades IX and X (aged 14 and 15 years). The sample from Kashmir consisted of 148 students (boys = 114, girls = 34) belonging to three schools run by the Indian Army. The Indian army schools were chosen mainly because these were the schools we were able to gain access to. The student sample from Delhi consisted of 173 students (boys = 125, girls = 48) drawn from two minority institutions. These schools specifically catered to Muslim children. The schools in Delhi had no affiliation with the Indian army.

Measures

We strongly felt that drawings would be more useful than questionnaires or interviews particularly for use with adolescents in Kashmir, who may feel inhibited directly airing their views to researchers from another part of the country. Students in Delhi as well as Kashmir were divided into two groups. At each location, one group of participants was asked to draw on the theme "Me and my country" (Theme condition). It was not implied in any manner that the country had to be India. The participants were allowed to interpret the theme as they deemed fit. The other group was asked to make "whatever is on your mind" as used in their study by Elbedour et al. (1997; No theme condition). Researchers assured the participants about the anonymity of any personal information they provided and honestly answered any questions that were raised. Materials for the drawing task which included

sheets, pencils, erasers, crayons, pencil colors, paints, and brushes were provided by the researchers. Everyone was given 1 hr to complete their drawings. After they had completed their drawings, the adolescents were requested to describe their pictures behind their drawing papers.

Analysis

Three raters independently sorted the drawings into categories based on the image and its description. The aesthetic value of the drawings was not considered while categorizing them. Later, the researchers compared their individual analysis. At this stage, there was 75% interrater agreement. Following the first sorting, the raters negotiated a common set of categories, then returned to the sample and independently coded each drawing again. In the second round, interrater agreement increased to 94%. Drawings that were for any reason uninterpretable were excluded from the analysis.

Results

Ninety-four adolescents from Delhi and 90 adolescents from Kashmir made drawings on "Me and my country." Seventy-nine adolescents from Delhi and 58 adolescents from Kashmir made drawings on any topic they desired. Table 1 presents the results that emerged.

National Identity

An interregional comparison shows that when provided the theme of "Me and my county," the percentages of responses pertaining to India were similar in the Delhi (51%) and Kashmiri samples (45.5%). In contrast, there was a much greater difference in the frequency with which India was represented in the drawings when the participants were asked to draw whatever they wished. Here, expressions of national

Figure 1. Religious harmony depicted by a Kashmiri participant.

Figure 3. Pride and patriotism depicted by a Kashmiri participant.

Figure 2. Religious harmony depicted by a Delhi participant.

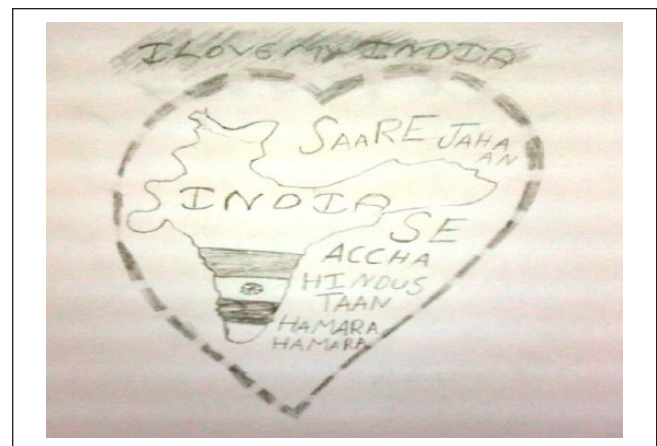**Figure 4.** Pride and patriotism depicted by a Delhi participant.

identity were clearly higher in the Delhi-based sample (15.2% in Delhi, 3.4% in Kashmir; this difference was found to be statistically significant, $z = 2.25$, $p < .05$).

An analysis of the drawings portraying India indicates that images from both Kashmir and Delhi tended to depict two ideas quite often. One was religious harmony, whereas the other was a sense of pride/patriotism toward the country. With respect to religious harmony, many pictures represented the coexistence of the four major religions of India—Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity (Figures 1 and 2). Some the drawings contained appeals for religious harmony and peace among different religions. One adolescent expressed the desire for her own religious community to be accepted by others. She wrote behind her drawing sheet "Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. All are equal. Don't difference between them. All Indians are our brother and sister . . . Don't think that he/she is Muslim then don't talk to him/her."

With respect to pride and patriotism, drawings collected from Kashmir and Delhi contained representations of national symbols like the Indian flag (see Figure 3), the map of the country (Figure 4), the national bird of India which is the peacock, and the country's geographical features such as the Himalayas.

Figure 4 reads "I love my India" in English. Written in the English script is "Saare jahan se accha, Hindustan hamara" which may be translated as "Our India is better than the whole world." This is the opening line of an extremely well-known patriotic song by Urdu poet Muhammad Iqbal. One of the drawings praised the Indian education system and glorified Indian inventions like the concept of zero. Drawings also depicted the developing infrastructure of India including factories, cars, hospitals, and hotels. The Taj Mahal was depicted by many participants in Kashmir.

Regional Identity

In line with our expectations, expressions of regional identity were more frequent in the Kashmiri sample. When given the theme of "Me and my country," 14.4% Kashmiris and 8.5% adolescents in Delhi represented their respective regions in

Figure 5. Life in the Kashmir Valley.

Figure 6. Scenery made by a Kashmiri participant.

Figure 7. Sceneries made by Delhi participants.

their drawings. This gap was more pronounced in the case of adolescents who drew freely. In this group, 19% adolescents in Kashmir depicted their region while only 3.8% adolescents in Delhi did so. Once again, this difference was found to be statistically significant ($z = 2.65$, $p < .01$). Drawings of the Theme and No theme groups from Kashmir depicted Kashmiri houses with typically slanting roofs, the education system in the Valley, the *Amarnath Yatra* (a pilgrimage undertaken by Hindus to the Amarnath Cave which is a shrine located in Kashmir), and life in the Valley (Figure 5). A handful of drawings referred to Kashmir as their country, using the two interchangeably.

Environment

The environment was frequently represented in the drawings of the participants, especially in the two No Theme groups. Particularly when allowed to draw freely, Kashmiri adolescents tended to represent the environment (58.6%), more frequently than the participants from Delhi (36.7%), a difference found to be statistically significant ($z = 2.54$, $p < .05$). Depictions of the environment by the Kashmiri participants showed scenes of nature that are specific to Kashmir like coniferous trees (chinar, deodar, pine), apple trees, tulip gardens, the Dal lake, and snow clad mountains (Figure 6). There was immense pride expressed in the beauty of Kashmir. The drawing below was titled "The Paradise of My Country" and was described by the participant as "Kashmir is the only paradise on my country. It seems that Gods have themselves touched each and everything, the beautiful mountains, green meadows, apple trees, lotus ponds etc. Kashmir seems like a scenery."

The drawings made on the environment by the participants in Delhi did not depict flora, fauna, or geographical features that were specific to Delhi. The drawings ranged from village landscapes to farm houses, mountains, and the backwaters of Kerala (Figure 7). Also there was no particular expression of pride with respect to the region.

Personal Identity

In contrast to the findings on regional identity, expressions of personal identity were found only in the drawings of Delhi-based adolescents. In the Delhi-based sample, 5.3% adolescents depicted the self when given the theme "Me and my country." This number rose to 17.7% when allowed to draw freely. Many drawings revolved around adolescents' own likes and choices, hopes, and aspirations. For instance, in Figure 8, the adolescent has written his own name "Wasim." According to him, those who are named Wasim are "good and successful in their professional lives," for instance Wasim Akram, the Pakistani cricketer. He feels that that he too will become successful one day. Some other instances included the depiction of a mother cooking her daughter's favorite food, self-portraits, and the portrayal of interest in music. There were no expressions of personal identity in the drawings of Kashmiri adolescents.

Violence

A small number of drawings from Kashmir and Delhi contained depictions of violence in the Theme as well as No Theme conditions. We had expected to see more portrayals
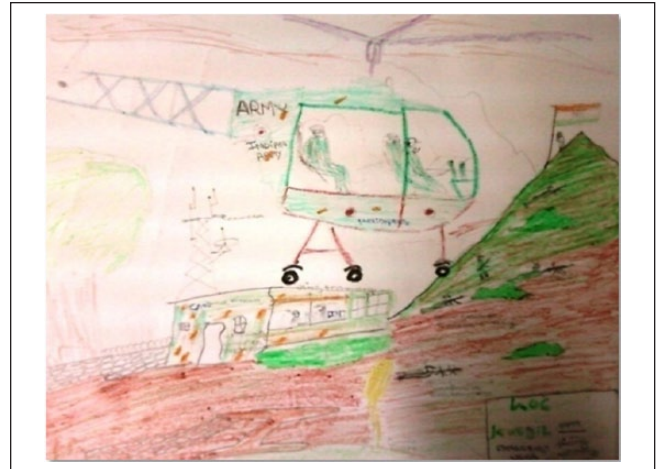
Figure 8. The self represented by a Delhi participant.

Figure 9. The Kargil war depicted by a Kashmir participant.

Figure 10. A scene of theft depicted by a Delhi participant.

of violence in the drawings of Kashmiri children. Although this generation has not directly witnessed the peak of the insurgency in Kashmir, group identities can pass from one generation to the next through narratives of violence (Stryker, 1987). This was, however, not reflected in most drawings. The main difference in the drawings of Kashmir and Delhi was the nature and form of violence shown. In the drawings from Kashmir, the violence portrayed was the kind experienced at a collective level. Drawings ranged from the Kargil War (Figure 9) to terrorism, stone pelting, and pro-*aazadi* protest movements in Kashmir to the nuclear explosion in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Delhi, violence was more personal in nature. The drawings depicted crimes committed on an individual level such as murder, wife battering, and theft (Figure 10).

Discussion

The results showed that when drawing topics of their own choice, the participants from Kashmir depicted the Indian state less frequently than those in Delhi. Young people in Kashmir created more images of their region showing stronger ties to it than the nation. Their images of Kashmir were imbued with a sense of pride. The history of Kashmir, as described earlier, explains clearly the connection that its people have with land. The strong bond is best encapsulated in the term *Kashmiriyat* introduced earlier in the article. According to M. I. Khan (2002, 2004), this term emerged in the early 1970s and is a notion that represents Kashmir as a unique region where people of different religions lived harmoniously for centuries. *Kashmiriyat* symbolizes a sense of regional belonging that transcends religious boundaries, and it is this sense of regional belonging that is reflected in the drawings. In terms of present political developments, Wani (2012) discusses how Kashmiri nationalists have recognized that highlighting the attributes of the Kashmiri culture is needed for mobilizing masses to test the possibility of achieving the political authority they have long desired. Correspondingly, there has been an increase in Kashmiri

cultural and intellectual activity in the last few years, possibly strengthening further the people's regional identity.

The story for Delhi and its inhabitants is very different. While the people of Kashmir have struggled to define their relationship with the Indian state, Delhi has always been an integral part of India and its capital since 1931. Delhi is the hub of political activity, and every national event including India's Republic Day and Independence Day is celebrated in the heart of the city. Unlike Kashmir, which has its unique language, food, and clothing, largely uninfluenced by outside forces, the capital's culture is an amalgamation of many regional influences. Delhi is a large city inhabited by migrant people from all over the country, and the residents of the city perhaps feel less rooted to it than do the people of Kashmir to their own land. There is no collective sense of identity corresponding to *Kashmiriyat* that exists for the people of Delhi.

As said earlier, only the participants in Delhi expressed "I dominant" identities. There were no representations of the individual self in the Kashmiri drawings. It has been suggested that greater the external placidity, the greater the tendency toward concern with individual identity, while greater the external conflict the greater the tendency to align one's

identity with the group (Elbedour et al., 1997). Clemens (2007) suggests that those of us who live in relative peace have the luxury of forming an identity around individualistic aspects of our lives. The absence of a chronic war-like situation in Delhi may provide greater spaces for young people to think about who they are as individuals. Moreover, the increasing impact of Western values has caused young people in the urbanized pockets of India to assert their individual preferences and choices rather than those of the collective, as was traditionally the case. Clemens goes on to say that where high-intensity conflict occurs as is the case in Kashmir, identity is overwhelmed by notions of "us" and "them." Group members define themselves not only with reference to their membership group but also with reference to the other group and with reference to the relative success of the groups in achieving the goal of their competition/conflict (Sherif & Sherif, 1953; see Elbedour et al., 1997). These feelings were not expressed in the drawings of the Kashmiri adolescents. For example, there were no drawings pitting Kashmir against India or setting Hindus and Muslims as rivals. Interestingly, the drawings from Kashmir neither contained an overwhelming amount of violence nor a fractured or damaged relationship with the Indian state. Thus, while the frequency with which the Indian state was depicted was less, the State or the Indian Army, when depicted, was not represented negatively. This may come across as surprising given the history of violence in Kashmir and the unsettled issue of Kashmiri people's right to decide their own fate. Having been ruled since 1586, successively by the Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs, Dogras, and the Indian government, the Kashmiri people do feel an acute sense of grievance about having had little agency over their land (Whitehead, 2004). Some Kashmiris have espoused an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir, free from the rival claims of both India and Pakistan (P. Bukhari, 2011). A poll conducted in 2010 showed that on average 43% people in Indian-administered Kashmir favored independence (Mushtaq, 2010).

There are, however, some factors that could explain the results. First and most importantly, the data were collected in schools run by the Indian army. Although schools are meant to educate children, the knowledge students acquire is socially constructed. There are several examples in history to show how schools and the education they impart come to serve as mediums of ensuring the continuation of dominant power structures (Kridel, 2014). The selection of content for any academic program may be seen implicitly or explicitly as an imposition of values (Marsden, 2001). For instance, American Indian boarding schools appeared in the Americas in the late 19th century as an outcome of the U.S. governments' desire to forcibly assimilate the Native Americans. In the 20th century, the ethos of these schools was to immerse Native American children in Euro-American culture, supplanting the students' names, languages, cultural practices, and food with Anglo-American culture (Ainsworth, 2013). Education thus became a primary method in the acculturation process. As said earlier,

it is possible that schools run by the Indian army in the Kashmir Valley serve as sites through which the dominant narrative of the Indian state is disseminated while others are sidelined. It is not uncommon for alternative narratives unacceptable to those in power to be oppressed. The findings of the study must be understood in relation to the possibility that the State narrative permeates into the education provided in these schools and this in turn shaped the results that we found.

Another related factor explaining the results pertains to various projects undertaken by the Army, aimed at winning the confidence of the Kashmiri people. These efforts have been formalized as Operation *Sadhbhavana* (literally meaning goodwill). Large posters with the message "*Jawan aur Awam, Aman Hai Muqaam*" meaning "the soldier and the people, peace is the destination" are a common sight (Anant, 2011). The *Sadhbhavana* project aims to restore the infrastructure destroyed during the insurgency and seeks human resource development in the region. Apart from running its own schools, the operation provides assistance to government schools and primary health centers. It also covers the construction of roads, bridges, and vocational training centers among various other initiatives. In interviews with local Kashmiris, Anant (2011) finds that among all the people who were spoken to, none were opposed to these initiatives. Some believed that the army's projects had begun to have a positive effect on the perceptions of people. However, it was also reported that in places like Baramulla and Sopore, which have been the bastions of the separatist sentiment, these initiatives were not well received, perhaps because memories of the army's actions during the peak of the insurgency remain starkly alive. Participants also acknowledged that despite these efforts, real peace could only come to Kashmir with the resolution of the political problem. The *Sadhbhavana* project has also been seen as having dimensions other than those related to development and infrastructure building. Mohana Bhan has discussed how compassion can be a strategy to contain political dissension, regulate citizenship, and normalize extensive militarization. She writes that the deployment of human security and development in counterinsurgency has blurred the boundaries between militarism and humanitarianism. Arming the military with moral powers and suffused with the vocabulary of compassion and humanism, the operation has become a strategy to monitor and regulate noncombatant civilians or "incipient terrorists" (Bhan, 2014). Another criticism directed at the operation is that the army rarely involves nongovernment organizations in their activities, although many of these organizations exist in Kashmir. Moreover, projects are usually top-down and at times idiosyncratic, like the renovation of Sufi shrines (Mukherjee, 2010). Despite these views and the fact that Kashmiris may respond to the Indian army efforts only gradually, the schools we visited are likely to be spaces in which the army is able to highlight with tenacity, the welfare work it has undertaken, thereby influencing the perceptions of students.

The desire of the army to alter its image in the minds of Kashmiri people is also apparent on other fronts. Last year, the Indian army issued an unusual apology for shooting dead two teenage boys in the Valley ("Kashmir: India Army," 2014). In the same year, when Kashmir was hit by devastating floods, the Indian Armed Forces conducted rescue and relief operations and provided humanitarian assistance. As per the army, it rescued over two lakh people during the relief operations, and organized several medical teams as well as relief camps in the Srinagar and Jammu region (The Times of India, 2014). Once again, the army's efforts are likely to be positively perceived by students studying in these schools, for the reasons stated above. Although much has been said about the rescue operations of the army, it must be known that local Kashmiri people played an integral role in saving many lives during the disaster. Even before the army, police, or civil administration could reach the people, local volunteers had begun rescue efforts to save stranded persons using makeshift rafts (S. Bukhari, 2014; Press Trust of India, 2014b). Free food was distributed along the roadsides in Srinagar, and tents with community kitchens were made on the grounds of mosques. Young people also acted as voluntary traffic regulators to direct cars and rescue vehicles when the main roads were blocked (S. Bukhari, 2014). The Indian army has acknowledged the valiant efforts of the volunteers as well as the help they provided to the army in its own rescue efforts (Press Trust of India, 2014a).

Finally, the effect of social desirability must also be considered in explaining our results. Despite our assurances of complete confidentiality, the participants may have felt pressured to provide responses they believed were acceptable to outsiders like us and to people who run the school.

The low levels of violence depicted in the drawings of the children may reflect the actual reduction in violence that has taken place in the Valley. Staniland (2013) explains that the consolidation of military control and the fencing of the Line of Control have made it harder for armed groups to operate in significant numbers in peripheral areas. Pakistan has reduced its support for nonstate militancy due to its own political conditions and American pressure. Muslim Kashmiri activists and intellectuals have also moved away from militancy toward nonviolent activities as the way to achieve their objective of political autonomy. On the political front in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, elections have been regularly held since 2002 and voter turnout rates have risen over time. In 2014, Jammu and Kashmir registered its highest voter turnout in assembly elections in the last 25 years with an estimated 65% of voters casting their votes (Press Trust of India, 2014c). These numbers notwithstanding, democracy remains fragile in the Valley.

None of the drawings made by participants in Kashmir and Delhi contained representations of Islam. We do not take this to mean that the participants do not identify with their religion. In fact, other data collected as a part of the project we were doing very clearly indicated a well-developed religious identity in the participants at both locations. One possible reason for the results may be that the adolescents were not accustomed to the idea of using drawings as a means to express religious sentiments especially when in school. During art lessons, children are typically encouraged to draw on subjects such as the environment and social causes. Religion rarely emerges as a topic to be explored in art classes in mainstream schools. This is even less likely to happen in Kashmiri schools that are run by the Indian army, as was the case for our sample.

Limitations of the Present Study and Directions for Future Research

The present study has certain limitations. First, the samples taken from Delhi and Kashmir were limited in number and from a small number of schools. Moreover, in the case of Kashmir, data were collected only from adolescents in Indian Army schools. Due to this, the results of the study cannot be generalized to the rest of population in Kashmir. It is imperative that similar kinds of work be conducted with adolescents and educators in a variety of school settings in Kashmir, particularly those that have no link with the Indian army. Furthermore, the results may not be generalizable to other communities in other sites of violence and conflict. Given that the present study focused on a comparison between Delhi and Kashmir, the latter being a Muslim majority area troubled by conflict, it may be important to replicate this study in a Hindu majority area which has experienced conflict, like Gujarat. Also, the present study could not assess gender differences due to the availability of a limited female sample. It may be useful for future research to identify the influence of gender on the variables considered in the study, as it has been found that women and men are exposed to different traumas in times of conflict. They may exhibit different psychological problems, cope in different ways, and have different thresholds for entering psychological treatment.

Authors' Note

Underlying research materials related to the article (e.g., data, samples, or models) can be accessed by contacting the corresponding author.

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Note

1. The term *Kashmir* refers to an area that includes the Indian-governed state of Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistan-administered territories of Gilgit–Baltistan and Azad Kashmir and the Chinese-administered regions of Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram Tract. This article pertains to only the Indian-governed state of Jammu and Kashmir.

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