

Abstract

Title of Thesis: The Oral History Analysis of 1947 Partition Survivors and Their Changes
 in Identity

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The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan sent shock waves throughout many communities on both sides of the newly established borders between India and Pakistan. It caused mass waves of migration and violence with many people fleeing their homes in fear. Transcripts and summaries archived by the 1947 Partition Archive in Berkeley, CA have given us a better picture of what people were feeling and experiencing during this tumultuous time. The organization and preservation of these accounts are important, so that we may see and understand how people were both positively and negatively affected by partition. A selection of 17 oral histories were selected to give us the widest range of experiences and beliefs as possible. Using coding methods to find both common patterns and unique experiences from each oral history, we can then analyze themes of well-being, independence and freedom, feelings surrounding partition, and identity in order to understand how they had an impact on each other.

THE ORAL HISTORY ANALYSIS OF 1947 PARTITION SURVIVORS AND THEIR
CHANGES IN IDENTITY

By

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Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful family. Without them I would never have had the confidence or strength to continue on this journey. I am thankful to my siblings, Chloe and James, who had to put up with my ups and downs, and supported me all the way. I am also thankful to my parents, Jill and John, who convinced me to pursue my dreams. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my late grandma, Jan Zimmerman, who loved to celebrate every accomplishment. I wish I could celebrate this one with you.

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Chapter 1: An Introduction to the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan and Oral Histories

The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan was a violent and bloody time in history where the lives lost are still speculated upon by scholars to this day. This sudden rift between India and Pakistan is so deep that we are still feeling the effects of it today with tensions between the two countries and fights between them still breaking out. This split between India and Pakistan rippled into surrounding areas and in 1971 was the basis for the Liberation War for Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Liberation War was when Bengali nationalists revolted against the rule of Pakistan and established their own country of Bangladesh. The impact of the widespread violence and migration are finally being studied and preserved as the people who experienced partition are aging and slowly disappearing before they have a chance to share with us their story and memories. How did the sudden changes in people's well-being and personal freedoms from the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan affect their identity? The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the question and begin to understand how they felt about partition and how it caused splits in people's well-being, independence and freedoms, and finally how these splits can cause changes in people's identities. I will also look into how these changes affected people's identities both willingly and unwillingly. As well as, how their views on their newfound independence from both the British and each other caused more division and violence that we can still see affecting them today.

Oral histories and storytelling are an important way for these people to share their experiences with us as even with increasing literacy rates across the world, this elderly population was not always privileged enough to learn to read or write. Oral storytelling allows us

to reach all different socio-economic backgrounds as well as record these interactions and stories for preservation for the families as well as research purposes. Being able to record and hear from different backgrounds and walks of life means that we can get a more complete picture of what people experienced during partition, as well as, how people were impacted afterwards.

I have selected 17 oral histories from The 1947 Partition Archive in Berkeley, CA that I believe support my question and give us a glimpse into that tumultuous time period and how it affected people's identities. In order to be able to complete this picture, I selected multiple themes that I saw spanning the different accounts and their experiences with partition and migration. These themes are well-being, freedom and independence, and feelings about partition. These themes all come together to help form people's identities and how it changed after partition. The 17 stories were selected as they had one or more of these themes as well as added unique context to partition or experiences, without becoming repetitive. This is due to my belief that identity spans further than just nationality or religion and we can see this echoed in some of the oral history accounts. This idea is reflected in a definition given by Ashcroft et al. "For some, post-nationalism is a way forward into ways of rethinking identity based on ways of defining common human values rather than on territorial identities that is a vital response to the changing conditions of the twenty-first century" (Ashcroft et al. 2009:216).

The themes of well-being, identity, freedom and independence, and feelings about partition can be found across almost every single account. For this thesis I define well-being as how people's lives changed during and after partition or how bad their experience of partition was. Freedom and independence are expressed in how people felt about British rule as well as how they perceived the new country where they resided after partition. Feeling surrounding partition and the theme of identity were often a combination of the themes. Some identities were

willingly changed while others may have been forced, often causing differences in how they perceive partition, while feelings surrounding partition are often created with regard to well-being before and after, as well as, how they believe partition was handled by both British and Indian authorities.

For the second chapter of the thesis, I will be covering an in-depth analysis of the background and history of British Rule in India, as well as the decisions and the people behind them that led to partition India and Pakistan. I will also discuss why oral history is important as well as how it is a useful medium for research and preservation.

Then in the third chapter, I will be covering theories and other pieces of literature that covered the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan. Theories such as anti-colonialism and nationalism, that are still very prevalent in Indian and Pakistani politics today.

The fourth topic to be covered will be the methodology used to collect my data. This was an involved process of checking the interviewee's permissions for sharing and research as well as the process of coding the oral history accounts into quantifiable data using coding techniques to identify patterns and as well as unique experiences. As well as delving into the interviewing process that the 1947 Partition Archive follows.

This is followed by the results chapter of the thesis, where all 17 oral history transcripts are being looked at through the lens of the themes that were picked out earlier in the methodology section: freedom and independence, well-being, feelings on partition, and identity. Quotes are being used to analyze the selected themes and to support the research question.

The analysis section of the thesis describes application of a methodology to code data from the oral history transcripts, using the identified themes in the oral histories to help us understand how people were affected by partition. We will also be analyzing how identities were

changed and formed through experiences other than religion and nationality. How such violence broke out so suddenly after partition's announcement, and how painting a full picture with many different perspectives and voices can help us to reduce harmful narratives. The analysis is followed by a conclusion discussing the outcomes and larger implications of this thesis.

Chapter 2: The History of Oral Storytelling and of British Rule

Oral storytelling is one of the oldest methods of passing down history and knowledge, and is still widely used today, even if not in its traditional format. Before any sort of traditional writing system, there was spoken language and with this language came storytelling. Examples of oral storytelling throughout history are the Polynesian cultures throughout the Pacific Ocean. They used oral storytelling through methods such as song or chants. Another popular method of oral storytelling were myths or legends, passed down from generation to generation. Oral storytelling also was a popular method to keep track of genealogy. One such example of this were the Choctaw tribes, whose stories were meant for education and to keep the history of their tribes alive (National Geographic Society 2024:np).

Oral storytelling is still very much alive online on social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, where we see people talking about their day or opinions in styles such as “video blogging” or “vlogging”. There was even a trend on social media called “storytimes” where people recount interesting or scandalous events that happened to them or that they witnessed. Today, oral storytelling in the old and traditional sense, is seen less and less with the prevalence of written language and even through historical acts such as colonization, that caused people to stop speaking their native languages, such as Gaelic or Hawaiian.

Colonialism is also extremely important for the context of the partition between India and Pakistan. British colonialism has a long history that begins in Africa, before they even create the East India Company (Hicks 2020). With the British colonies spanning multiple centuries and continents we begin to see patterns of control and violence throughout their reign. One anthropologist describes British control as “When the British colonize, they take what they want,

take off when they've finished, and let their former colonies fend for themselves" (Miles 2014:103).

This idea is reflected through their takeover of India, which began simply as setting up trading outposts and devolved into violence in 1858 when they quelled a political uprising against the Mughal Empire and instituted the rule of the British Raj. It is a common pattern in British colonialism to set up one of their trading companies in a country and then begin using shady negotiations and bribes to begin to win favor with the elite, before seizing control of a country when they have an opportunity. They promote strife and violence by initiating skirmishes between different groups of people to help with the destabilization of the current power (Dirks 2001:63-64). We can see this pattern emerge in Ireland as well when the British look to "set about seeing what could be done to mollify 'disloyal' nationalist Ireland", in 1920-1921, with their British forces combining with loyalists to target the Irish Republican Army, causing thousands of deaths in Northern Ireland (Ó Beacháin 2014:11-12).

This, of course, does not even begin to cover the violence that can occur once the people who are being colonized grow restless or the resentment begins to come to a boiling point causing protests and even an uprising. Colonialism has a long history of violence and suppression, and with the British, it often starts and ends with violence. We see that their takeovers usually begin through a power exchange through violence after quelling protests over their presence or the existing leaders, and when they have what they needed from the country they were colonizing, they simply pull out of the country, suddenly leaving it with very little infrastructure and a scramble for power that causes more suffering and violence.

The 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan is a very well-known event now, but it was surprisingly undocumented during its time. For years after Partition took place, it was not spoken

about due to the trauma, violence, and taboo surrounding it. Exact numbers are unknown of how many people were displaced from their homes, or how many people on each side were killed. The regions of modern day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have always had a rich and diverse history and people living within its borders. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs lived in the region for thousands of years in relative peace until it was all disrupted almost completely overnight.

The 1947 Partition Archive uses oral storytelling as their medium to document the lives and experiences of those who lived through the partition of British India. As mentioned earlier, some of the regions of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are undereducated, leading to some being illiterate, and the use of oral storytelling means that we can include and record a much wider range of stories and experiences than ones that are only written down by the owner of the story. Using oral storytelling, and if they allow the Archive to do so, recording these interviews allows us to preserve their story for much longer, than just summarizing the interview. It allows us to look back over the interview multiple times to clarify what was said instead of reaching back out or potentially losing it forever, if they unfortunately pass away. The recording of these interviews is not just important to us, but also for their family. When the Archive has finished all its documenting and archiving work, a copy is sent back to the families for them to watch and enjoy as well.

The Partition of British India in 1947 was a cataclysmic event that can be traced back to World War II. After Indians joined the British army and fought for them during World War II, a lot of them came back and kept their guns, even some going as far as burying them and hiding them so that the government could not take them away. Multiple political parties pop up as well that begin to advocate for independence from the British such as the Communist Party of India,

the Muslim League, the Congress, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (the RSS). All these different parties did not get along and often had disagreements. The Muslim League and the Congress Party were the parties mostly in charge of the Indian subcontinent during 1947. With the Muslim league actively lobbying for a Muslim nation separate from “Hindustan”. In fact, many of the experiences that I listened to and read said that they believe that the Muslim League leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and the leader of the Congress party, Jawaharlal Nehru, were both hungry for power and could not exist peacefully, and therefore came up with the plan to split the subcontinent “I believe the British used the Divide and Rule policy, just like the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. After Partition, I hated the Indian National Congress for a while, as I regarded the non-unity of the leaders responsible for Partition” (Pal 2024:E87).

Another event that showed some serious underlying tensions between the different groups living together under British rule were the Noakhali riots that occurred in 1946. Tensions had escalated due to the famine caused by World War II and when the Muslim League called for direct action on August 16, 1946. Then Ghulam Hossein Sarwar, a politician, called for violence in the Shahpur Bazaar on September 29th, causing mass spread looting and arson. (Mahajan 2024:E90-91).

With these two different parties lobbying for power in this tumultuous time, there was an emergence of riots that broke out in large urban areas such as Lahore, Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Delhi. A rogue member of the RSS party was even the one to assassinate Gandhi. With many of the members of the RSS actively working in these riots with hidden and stashed weapons. With so much chaos and bloodshed on both sides it is hard to say if one side started it over the other, but there was plenty of bloodshed caused by the former military through the lobbying and messages spread by the RSS.

Another name constantly brought up when discussing the history of the 1947 Partition is Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. Admiral Mountbatten was the Viceroy of India at the time when Independence and Partition was announced. He was placed in charge of executing Partition by the Leader of the Indian Congress Party and elected leader Nehru. He is also not looked upon favorably by many of the migrants, as they feel he rushed the Partition of the country and that is why there was so much violence and bloodshed. Many believe that if proper time and care was taken when separating the subcontinent then it would have turned out quite differently “Reflecting on Partition, she does think that things could have been conducted in a smoother, better planned manner” (Madan 2023:np).

The events that took place during August of 1947 had an effect on the surrounding areas, even causing East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to go into a great famine due to the violence and eventually split from Pakistan in 1971 (1947 Partition Archive 2024:E80-81). The effects of Partition are still felt on the population of the three countries and current generations even today.

When I asked my mother about it repeatedly, the stock reply was, “Nothing happened in our *mohalla* (neighbourhood). It happened in the next.” When we compared notes at school, as children are wont to, all mothers, it seemed, were saying similar things. “Nothing happened in our village, it happened in the next village.” It was as if the parents had collaborated on a mass scale. Among many things, the silence caused a rupture of memory, a yawning gap in the continuity of histories of our families. And that itself can be frustrating and unsettling.

Much later when I became a psychiatrist, I realised that whatever the motives, silence just bottles up the pain which in turn messes up lives later, rather than offer any real balm. I wished our parents, and hundreds of thousands like them, had talked about Partition, even if just among themselves (Kala 2024:W139-140).

Chapter 3: Theory of Oral History and Partition

While doing research on others who have covered the same or similar topics to mine, I found that many books and articles that were written about the 1947 Partition of British India had very similar overarching themes and theories to one another. As well as, they had very similar ideas and beliefs that were held around other similar historical events such as the Partition of Ireland and “The Troubles” that followed, the civil war in Lebanon and their politics in the aftermath, and finally the current happenings we see in the states of Palestine and Israel. It is important to look at all these similar moments in history while analyzing the 1947 Partition of British India, because it can help us see how history has repeated itself and how much there is still left to learn about history from the people who have lived through those historic events.

Some of the theories covered by writers and some even found, albeit unintentionally, in the interviewees’ testimonies is anti-colonialism. Anti-colonialism is usually formed via a pushback from some outside ruling force. Examples of this are of course, British India, the British occupation of Ireland, and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. “Anti-colonialism signifies the point at which the various forms of opposition become articulated as a resistance to the operations of colonialism in political, economic and cultural instances.” (Ashcroft et al. 2009:15). Anti-colonialism emphasizes the nations need to reject the ruling power over them and restore control over the nation with local rule. Anti-colonialism often tends to lead to feelings of nationalism. With this political pushback and rallying feelings of emerging nationalism, we see rises in governing bodies such as the Indian National Congress, which was able to unite multiple groups of people from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds into a singular independence movement against British rule (Ashcroft et al. 2009:16).

Another important theoretical context throughout a lot of Britain's history, and one of the main causes for partition, was colonialism. Themes of colonialism are often seen in the interviewees' testimonies if they were old enough to remember life before partition, or if they recall certain family events where they clashed with British officers or even worked for the British government in India. "We now know that colonial conquest was not just the result of the power of superior arms, military organization, political power, or economic wealth—as important as these things were. Colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened, as much by cultural technologies of rule as it was by the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest that first established power on foreign shores" (Dirks 2001:9).

Anti-colonialism is found throughout almost every single nation on the planet, and good examples of this are "Independence Days" such as those in Canada and the United States. Anti-colonialism and the wide lens that encompasses it, is a foundation for many of the other theories that will be used throughout this paper. Every single interview I have acquired was very anti-colonial, no matter how they viewed the partition that followed, almost every single Indian and Pakistani were happy to be free of British rule.

Many peoples' avenues of thought centering around the 1947 Partition of British India also focus on the decolonization period that happened afterwards. In fact, many historical lenses and theories will all take a look at how a nation rebuilt when gaining their independence and their birth as a free nation. Decolonization is the process of revealing and dismantling colonial powers. This can include more subtle practices or policies set in place to subjugate the native population (Ashcroft et al. 2009:73), Decolonization can be seen in many forms in both the interviewees' stories and in the articles found. It is important to note that some viewed the colonization more favorably than others or the other way around, where some were extremely

angry about colonial rule. In fact, many times after a nation gained independence from their colonizer, they tend to appropriate or copy from the people who colonized them as a way to jumpstart their own economy or government.

Many of the sources found are studies that got their information from anthropological research called ethnography. Ethnography is a methodology used by cultural anthropologists consisting of fieldwork and reporting. Fieldwork simply put is the process of observing, collecting and recording data. Reporting is the production of a written description and analysis of the subject of the study (Ashcroft et al. 2009: 103). Ethnographies are usually performed by people from outside of the culture that is being studied. This does leave this method of study open to criticism as these studies can end up viewing the studied culture through very western lenses and when we are looking at colonialism and colonial discourse, then we must be careful that ethnographies are being done in a respectful way.

Ethnographies center around studying, viewing and listening to the ways of life of a culture different from our own. Oral storytelling tends to only be one side of an ethnography, but here it is being used as the sole method of information about the lived experiences of the 1947 Partition of British India since it is something that we can no longer observe today. The same goes for many other historic events, since we cannot view them with our own eyes, we must use the eyes and memories of others. However, since it was experienced differently by everyone, the goal was to gather varied experiences from all sides of the partition, in order to get the most well-rounded and unbiased view. With ethnographies, I want to remind people that it is important to get a varied collection since these oral sources can be biased depending on who is talking. Everyone has their own opinion that matters, but we cannot let a single opinion sway an entire ethnography.

The theory of post-colonialism is meant to deal with the effects of colonialism on a society's culture. Post-colonialism is used in the modern day in a wide array of methods to study and analyze the European territorial conquests and the institutions of European colonialism. Through its lens it aims to analyze historical, political, sociological, and economic impacts on impacted nations and societies (Ashcroft et al. 2009:204). Many nations have felt the impact of European nations and their rule. The French rule over the nation of Lebanon and how they set up the government while in power was one of the many defining political reasons that caused so much strife in the country later on. Ireland still feels the effects today of colonialism as they are still not unified over 100 years later. The interviewees' accounts also provide us with perfect lenses to view colonial powers and the post-colonial state that India and Pakistan were left in with the sudden withdrawal of Britain after World War II.

Another common theme and theory that are found throughout many books and articles is called sectarianism. The definition of sectarianism as given by the Cambridge dictionary is “very strong support for the religious or political group that you are a member of, which can cause problems between different groups”. Sectarianism is seen prominently throughout the Partition of Ireland during 1918-1922 or “The Troubles”. Where 2 different sects of Christianity, the Protestants and the Catholics, clashed violently. Sectarianism is also seen in divides such as the Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and the Muslims and Coptic Christians in Egypt today, Sectarianism is not funded solely via religious divides, but instead the religious divides between denominations or separate groups is an indicator for deeper political divisions and issues (Allen 2021). I plan on using sources gathered through interviews and oral history as well as academic sources to see if and how sectarianism may have played a role in the Partition of British India and how it has been used and is still being used today.

The final and most important theory is on identity. Identity is often hard to quantify as everyone's identity is different from what they believe about themselves and from how people perceive them. However, a more recent interpretation of identity emerged at the beginning of the twenty-first century. "For some, post-nationalism is a way forward into ways of rethinking identity based on ways of defining common human values rather than on territorial identities that is a vital response to the changing conditions of the twenty-first century" (Ashcroft et al. 2009:216). This applies to the oral history summaries and transcripts as identity here is being used to look past religion and nationality and to see how identity is changed and formed from themes such as well-being, independence and freedom, and feelings surrounding partition.

Chapter 4: Oral History Methodology

The experiences of the people who lived through the Partition of British India in 1947 are vastly different from one person to another, from region to region. I have read and listened to hundreds of peoples first hand accounts. Each one has an important story to tell and very different perspectives on Partition, the government during the time of the decision, and its outcome many years later. I selected 17 stories that I felt were the best suited for the question I proposed and the analysis I was doing. These oral histories were selected both from their database and their published book, which is filled with even more recountings of the 1947 Partition. The purpose of this thesis is to look into how the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan caused splits in people's identities and how this affected their well-being and beliefs on independence. As well as, to see how their views on how their newfound independence from both the British and each other caused more division and violence that we can see even today.

I ended up with 17 stories to use for this thesis through a thorough selection process. The first criteria was to make sure the interviewee allowed for their stories to be used in printed work. Next, I looked through stories in the archive and analyzed them for similar themes. Then, I made sure that the stories had more to add in terms of context to partition, or unique experiences. Even with over 12,000 stories in the archive, some overlap was bound to pop up in between stories, and this is where themes of well-being, independence and freedoms, feelings about partition, and identity were found. However, this overlap does come with some drawbacks. Even though each person's perspective is unique, stories can begin to sound similar and have similar context if they live in the same regions or have the same religion. This is how 17 stories became my perfect amount of stories. They added unique context and experiences, as well as, having overlapping themes without beginning to feel repetitive.

These oral history accounts were used to create a whole picture of the partition, which was why I felt that using oral histories would be the best for analysis. These oral history accounts are from people who directly witnessed and experienced this moment in history. The oral histories were selected for their different perspectives and experiences during partition, as well as, for their common themes tying them together. These themes are well-being, independence and freedoms, their feelings about partition, and identity. These common themes, yet different experiences and recountings are to ensure an all encompassing picture surrounding the partition, so as to not push any single narrative. As tensions are currently high between Pakistan and India, I wanted to make sure that people from both sides could be heard and understood.

The themes of well-being, independence and identity all mesh together and often form their overall feelings about partition and how it was handled. Identity was determined through their religion and from which country or region they considered themselves to hail from. Some would change their identities on their own or sometimes by force, while others would hold onto where they came from even if they were forced to leave. Well-being was determined by how they lived both before and after partition. If they were raised with education, good economic standing, and more, and how or if it changed after partition. Finally, themes of independence were separated into three subcategories: independence from Great Britain, independence from India, and for Bangladesh their independence from Pakistan.

In order to choose the personal accounts needed, it had to meet certain criteria. With over 12,000 stories in The 1947 Partition Archive's database, you are bound to run into similar experiences and themes. So, I wanted to hear more about their life after Partition to see the potential long-term effects of such traumatic experiences. I was also looking for people who migrated during Partition, as well as some who did not migrate. I was also careful to make sure I

got experiences from multiple different religions, such as Hinduism and Islam, to make sure one side was not represented more than others. I was also looking for stories that stood out, that talked about something unique, or added more context that others did not provide.

The point of this variety and uniqueness is to identify both common themes, as well as, add onto them with more detail. I wanted to make sure that I was avoiding only telling a single narrative. Singular narratives are quite common and can be even harmful if used to sway popular opinion. In fact, these singular narratives are something we can see as harmful during the effects of Partition and even after, how it divided an entire nation.

The 1947 Partition Archive's process for recording and storing is extensive. First, it often starts with oral history workshops where they train to become citizen historians. Then, the family of the interviewee or the participant themselves will reach out to the archive to ask for an interview. They are then matched with one of the citizen historians for an interview, where they will set a time and date. The interviewee and citizen historian may be joined by a camera person during this time. Usually the video is recorded, however, there have been some instances of audio only recordings. If the interviewer is proficient in English, then the process of transcribing and translating falls to them, so that both versions of the transcript can be archived. If they are not proficient in English, then it is translated by Google Translate until someone is available to properly translate the transcript. If the interviewee is willing, they can also share photos, books, and other such memorabilia that they own to be archived. This process is done by taking photos of the items that the participants share with us, which are then uploaded to our archive with the video. The archive stays in correspondence with the interviewee and their family until the video is fully edited and archived, where they will then receive a copy for them to download and keep for themselves (1947 Partition Archive 2024:E12-13).

The 1947 Partition Archive requires that each interviewee must fill out a release form. This release form documents their full name, signature/fingerprint if they are illiterate, Date of Birth and, importantly for my research, their permissions for publication and consent for research. The permission section in the release form refers to the few sheets in the release form that ask questions about how or if the Archive is allowed to share their story with the public. Some ask if a contributor would like to remain anonymous or if they do not want their oral history shared at all. Contributors to the archive can request that their stories not be shared until certain dates or that they only want it to be shared via print or even video. All release forms were checked over during selection of oral histories to use in this thesis, to ensure that the person who shared their invaluable story consented for it to be used for academic work, to avoid violating their explicit wishes.

The archive selected stories have their archival number attached to them, which they receive when finishing up the accession and intake process at the archive. This often includes translation of the transcript, copy-editing the newly created summary from the transcript, making sure all videos and photos submitted are not corrupted and named correctly, and finally hitting the submit button, which automatically begins the process for moving all the files from temporary storage with a T number to permanent cloud storage with the archival number you see.

While searching for these unique narratives, certain aspects of stories I used in my selection process were dependent upon decisions made previously by the interviewer. This included which questions they asked the interviewee, the length of the interview, and the language of the interview. I depended on many stories being conducted in English, as I am not familiar with the common languages in the regions of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. If I did

choose a story where the interview language was not in English, I was heavily reliant on the translation being correct. The questions that the interviewer asked the interviewee were also extremely important for my research. The interviewer had a long list of questions that they could potentially ask. These questions would shape the interview and the direction it went. These questions would bring detail to the story and shape how the interviewee would recount their story. Depending on the question the interviewer would ask, we would get different kinds of narratives focused more on life after Partition, more about daily life, or even more about the journey and the violence they witnessed or experienced.

On the other side, some similar themes that are found in each of the oral histories, were mentions of how well both sides seemed to get along with one another before Partition and Independence from the British was announced. Then, how it all changed very quickly and drastically once the two countries became separate. Another common theme between stories is riots and how it affected their living situations, and the decision whether or not to migrate during Partition. These are the themes of well-being and identity that this thesis analyzes. These are common occurrences in the oral histories, without directly falling into the themes that are being used to extract data. It shows us how even though these people were being artificially divided, they had a lot still in common with one another. These oral histories are important as they are the most accurate form of data to use as they are from direct witnesses, and being able to analyze them for common themes and differences helps us to understand partition better than before.

Both the common and unique themes found within these stories are what led to this number of oral history accounts being analyzed. People's perspective of their experiences is of vast importance, since not one person tells a full story. With so many different perspectives, we

can help to look past narratives pushed by singular points of reference such as history textbooks, or the governments themselves.

At the beginning of research and oral history searches, there were a couple points of reference that were looked for and focused on. One is the long-lasting effects of Partition and its effect on people's well-being and identity, as well as their perceived freedoms that they had both before and after partition. These themes are very important as just before the Partition of India and Pakistan, the people of colonized India were seeking independence from Great Britain. This is due to the vast amount of people who were affected by partition; all have varying beliefs on how they were affected or on how it was handled. It even extends to the Bangladesh Liberation War. The people who lived in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were considered to not be fully part of Pakistani identities, and they often separated themselves from other non-Bangladeshi identities. This gives lots of different experiences and beliefs to cover, as well as how identities evolved as people were forcibly split and labelled.

The next step was to turn the oral histories recountings into fully analyzable data. This process starts with sampling, which involves two steps. The first is identification of the "corpus" of your sources. If you have a smaller sample size, such as the 17 summaries in this analysis, then this step is not as important as they can all be analyzed. With many subjects that may need identification, this step is to help lower the number of subjects or accounts that need analyzing. The second step is either segmenting or unitizing based upon whether or not the objective is to identify non-overlapping units for analysis, if the objective is to compare whether or not certain themes occur, or to compare the number of times a theme occurs. Both segmenting and unitizing can be used here as the themes being looked at span many of the different accounts and are being

analyzed for overlaps and differences in how these themes are expressed. (Bernard et al., 2014: 648-652).

The next steps for analysis of the oral history data was to set up a system for codes. Coding is used to create definitions and datasets in ethnographies and difficult datasets when there is hard to measure results. These definitions are described below in Table 1. This was done for these oral history accounts by going through all of their transcripts line-by-line, identifying common themes and highlighting and color coding relevant points in their stories. There were highlights and color codes for different criteria of the data: talks of independence/personal freedoms, feelings of partition, well-being, and identity. These themes and their corresponding lines from each oral history transcript were picked as each theme could help change and feed a person's sense of identity. This is due to the belief that identity extends beyond just religion or nationality but it also encompasses family history, belief systems about the government, their upbringing, and more. Each data point is meant to support their change in how they view themselves and others before and after the events of partition. (Dewalt 2011:191)

Table 4.1: Coding Definitions

Key Theme	Definition
Well-being	States of happiness and prosperity, sadness and loss, and violence. As well as, how the interviewee's state of well-being was changed.
Independence and Freedoms	The ability for the interviewee or their family to travel freely and without supervision, the right to receive education. As well as, the restrictions people faced based upon caste or gender. Separated into independence from the British, independence from India, and Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan.
Feelings on Partition	Explicitly stated beliefs on how they felt

	partition was handled and how they felt it impacted their lives.
Identity	Self-described labels, religion, and nationality. This also includes socio-economic statuses such as jobs and caste.

All of these different points of interest come together to paint pictures of how identities view points shifted and were split for the people of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh by the governments. But it also shows us that not everyone shared the same sentiments even though they experienced the same events. Each story has an important piece of the puzzle that shows us the links between these different identities and beliefs and how these struggles are all similar, showcasing just how easy it is for people to become divided, whether it be by government, religion, or more.

Throughout reading and listening to different oral history accounts and summaries, there is quite a variety of opinions on how the Partition of India and Pakistan should have been handled, with oral history retellings from survivors spanning across Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Using these stories, themes began to appear across each story that give insight into the well-being and identity of survivors and witnesses of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan, and how these conditions changed after the major event took place.

Chapter 5: Oral History Results:

Each oral history recorded and preserved by the 1947 Partition Archive follows a certain set of rules and has a list of questions that the interviewer can pick from to ask the interviewee. Interviewers are encouraged however, to let the interviewee talk about their experiences in the manner they prefer, with the questions being used more as guidelines for the interview, as well as, helping bring the interview back on track if the topics tend to drift. 9 interviews were picked from the archive itself and 8 oral histories were picked from the 1947 Partition Archive's book *10,000 Memories: A Lived History of Partition* (1947 Partition Archive, 2024) that covered the widest range of perspectives and fit the thesis question. The archival stories will include their archival number, which is the order in which they were recorded, downloaded, transcribed, and stored. The book sources will be missing said archival numbers and are taken from the book mentioned above. Covering these perspectives was important for setting up a background for the actions and lived experiences of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan, so that we can see as many different identities, opinions, and changes as possible. Each story selected covers one or more of the themes of well-being, freedom and independence, identity, and their feelings on partition, in order to answer the question of how identity and well-being changed after the 1947 Partition of Pakistan and India.

Well-being

The theme of well-being focuses on both positive and negative changes in the interviewee's life or family and is one of the most common themes found in the oral history accounts, as for many of them life changed drastically. It is also one of the biggest causes for people's changes in identity. While just about every transcript or oral history summary has themes of well-being, these accounts focus more heavily on this theme than the others.

1) 10950-Ghulam Muhammad Kharal

Ghulam Muhammad Kharal, son of Sardara Kharal, was born in the village Chak Cheema in the district of Jhang, Punjab, Pakistan. He was 10 years old at the time of Partition, but does not remember when exactly he was born. Ghulam did not attend school when he was young. His mother died when he was very young and his father never remarried, so they had to take care of the home themselves. During partition, Ghulam Kharal did not migrate, but he watched everything happen to his village around him.

At the time of Partition, Ghulam recalls that everyone was looting. He himself went to loot and came home with items he found in a Hindu shop. Muslims would even abduct Hindu women and girls from other places, but not the Hindus from their own village, who were treated respectfully and escorted to a refugee camp. Those abducted girls were later exchanged, and looted material was collected by the village headman. The wealth was then distributed to Muslim migrants, who were settled and aided by other Muslims in the area. In general, Hindu land was allotted to Muslim migrants from East Punjab. Red fever was also rife during those days. (Kharal 2024:np)

Looting was extremely common during the days of partition since most people who had to migrate were fleeing in a very short time period, so they could not take most of their belongings with them. Due to these circumstances we see the looting mentioned above. People would loot and distribute goods to those who arrived in their village. Ghulam Kharal's story shows us the violence that erupted during partition and that not everyone was interested in helping their neighbor make it to safety. In some stories and summaries, people had very positive interactions with people of different religions, whereas we see direct violence occurring in his

village, with Ghulam Kharal even participating in looting. This shows us how sides banded together during partition and were not always willing to help each other in these times of violence.

Ghulam Kharal believed that partition was a mistake, saying “That life before Partition was better, as in those days, men were caring for each other, unlike the present, where they’ve become selfish. Women were also treated more respectfully. In addition, thieves ... were famous. He concludes that Partition has introduced negative aspects to human nature. [He] advises the younger generations to educate themselves and be respectful.” (Kharal 2024:np)

2) 152- Razia Sultana Usmania Kazia

Mrs. Sultana was born in Hyderabad in 1929. Her father was Mirza Usman Ali Beg. Mrs. Sultana’s mother was well educated and even wrote a book about their family, spanning back three generations. The book's name was ‘Story of Garden’ known as ‘Ruh-dade-Caman’ in Urdu. Her family was well connected to the ruling class in Hyderabad, which provided her unusual educational opportunities that were not often given to women. Her sisters all got masters in science and 3 became doctors.

Once again, we continue to see a theme before partition where peace and education were promoted, we see this when Mrs. Sultana talks about how she believed the Nizam rule was a golden era.

Nizam rule was a golden period. It was a safe haven and they never heard about guns or bullets. Education was also very good. There never used to be holidays for schools and it was such a time that education was important...Nizam used to say that his one eye is Muslim and one is Hindu and his kingdom cannot run without either.... There was a very good source of education and they promoted

women's education a lot. There used to be a lot of women's colleges and schools.

Nizam's gave a lot of grants to many educational institutes to promote education on a mass scale (Sultana 2018:np).

She recalls how well off families were in Hyderabad before partition. We see very clear examples of well-being and freedom and independence. Her education is an indicator of well-being as not all people were as lucky as her and her siblings to all be able to go to school, and even continue it during and after partition. She was at college in Delhi when partition was announced and riots broke out.

When Partition took place, Mrs. Sultana was studying in Lady Irwin College, Delhi and was a first year student. In August 1947, riots started and at that time she started seeing the coming and going of refugees. There were 15-20 female Muslims students there and Pur professor said "Ladies do not panic. We will take care of each other." Muslim girls were moved to top floor rooms for safety. They were taught by professors to wear a bindi and change their names to Hindu names to avoid any kind of problems. Mrs. Sultana changed her name to Romila from Razia. Some mobs came to the doors and asked that they gave them the Muslim girls, but the professors would tell them no, there were no Muslims here. Mrs. Sultana and her friends saw Delhi burning from the third floor terrace (Sultana 2023:np).

As Razia Sultana's story continues, it shows us strong themes of identity and how it affected and protected her. It shows how people were willing to help those that people thought were "different" or "other" and were willing to help people of different identities, even at their own risk. This is an important quote in her story because as all the violence unfolds throughout this

time period, it is important to remember that there were still people who wanted to help and protect others from those who were out to harm people of “other” identities.

3) 10813-Shamim Zaidi

Shamim Zaidi was born in the city of Palampur in the state of Himachal Pradesh in 1944. She was born to her mother, Nisar Fatima, and her father, Syed Nasir Ali Zaidi. Her family had roots in the ruling class of Himachal Pradesh on her mother’s side. She states that, “We left our nobility when we came to Pakistan.” Since she was quite young at the time, she does not remember much about the migration itself, however she has lots of insight into how it affected her family and what growing up was like in a new region.

Her mother was gravely affected by Partition. She was never able to fully recover from what had transpired. Around fifty members of her mother’s family were making their way to Pakistan, but they were ambushed in Amritsar and not a single person made it to Pakistan. The surviving family members made many efforts to find those lost but to no avail. Shamim shares that the loss resulted in a great mental anguish for her mother, and that she was never the same afterwards. She recalls, ‘She [her mother] would run to the station anytime she heard a train arriving and would start looking for her lost family members.’ Shamim’s father would lock Nisar (her mother) inside the house in order to stop her” (Zaidi 2023: np).

Partition horribly affected people for years after, not just during the span of time faced with outright violence and rioting. We can see her recounting how her mother was lost during the time of partition as well as the turmoil she experienced and even caused to her family due to her mental anguish. Her own husband feared for her safety and would lock her in. Mrs. Zaidi then

recounts to us her memories of growing up in such a home life. They were told by their new neighbors to go and live in an old house abandoned by Hindus migrating to India, which her parents denied. They had brought nothing with them during the migration and had to sell her mothers last pieces of jewelry to buy cutlery and beds. Here, we see again, that the living conditions for those who were forcibly moved during partition were not prepared for such an upheaval, and the newly formed government of Pakistan had no way to help them either. There was little way to know who had made it across the border safely, and who didn't, as well as very few ways to receive help when you had arrived.

These themes of well-being are apparent for Mrs. Zaidi and her family. They struggled greatly after migrating and had very little support in order to get back on their feet. We also have some themes of identity as well, but this time it does show us how some people felt negatively regarding their perceived "other groups". It is when Mrs. Zaidi's mother refuses to move into an abandoned house that once belonged to Hindus, even if it meant putting their family in a rougher living position. We see how much they struggled because of the Partition of India and Pakistan, and how it greatly affected their well-being.

4) 11102- Manohar Thakurdas Chugh

Manohar Chugh was born in 1943, to a Hindi family in Shikarpur city, Sindh. He does not focus as much upon his struggles during the violence of Partition as he was quite young at the time of migration, but like Mrs. Shamim Zaidi, we see a big focus on how partition affected their family for years afterwards, with an emphasis on their attempt to honor and keep a hold of their heritage.

At the onset of Partition, the family of six fled, travelling from Shikarpur to Karachi by train, taking no belongings with them. They then boarded a ship

bound for Bombay (now Mumbai). Manohar's father wanted to go to Bombay as it was a commercial centre. The family stayed in a refugee camp for a few months, later moving when Manohar's father found a small room for rent. The room had only one bed, and the living conditions were overall poor. The parents slept on the bed while the children rested on the floor. Hygiene was substandard, with thirty people sharing two toilets and everything being very dirty (Chugh 2025:np).

Once again, we see themes of the migrants struggling with basic necessities, as many had to travel lightly and leave most of their important belongings behind. Despite leaving their region of Sindh, Mr. Manohar Chugh and his family made it a point to not leave their old culture and language behind. He makes significant effort to make sure he is preserving his heritage for both himself and his family.

Despite living in [Mumbai], where the majority of people spoke other languages, the family still managed to preserve their native tongue and keep their Sindhi traditions alive. Manohar first studied at a Gujarati school, then a Sindhi one... Today, Manohar is still fluent in Sindhi, and his two daughters also speak the language. There is a Sindhi community in Hong Kong of which he is a member... His words of advice for future generations are to be determined and courageous and not to give up (Chugh 2025:np).

Mr. Manohar Chugh had a long and varied life. He was forced to leave his home in Sindh and migrated to Mumbai early in life, kept his heritage alive, with his family, and then continued to go to a Sindhi college and even moved to Hong Kong. We see very strong themes of identity throughout Mr. Manohar Chugh's oral recount about partition. He has worked hard to remember

his Sindhi upbringing and pass it down to his children. Even in Hong Kong he has found a Sindhi community. I find it important to show how even though partition was extremely divisive between separate cultures, it has caused more unity amongst groups. Bonding over their struggles and achievements, forming a community even overseas.

5) 10749-Muhammad Deen

Muhammad Deen, the son of Muhammad Ibrahim Araein, was born on the outskirts of Jagraon city. His parents were vegetable farmers at the time of partition. He gives us a glimpse into the experiences of poorer citizens and how they lived before partition. He tells us that his house was made of mud bricks and women often helped men farm in the fields until it was time to do more domestic duties like cooking and using the spinning wheel. Since he grew up in a farming community, they had no radios or gramophones, so news was slow to reach them about elections, the creation of Pakistan, and partition.

When discussing the events leading up to the migration, he explained that he had little knowledge of elections during that time. His awareness mainly revolved around the emergence of Pakistan and the escalating troubles in the region. The Klair Sikhs extended their help as they offered grain and even buffalos to assist. Their interaction with a Sikh Tehsildar (a revenue officer) led to an agreement to cease hostilities until they reached Moga.

In those trying days, Muhammad Deen recalled continuing their education at a camp school, followed by a move to Sidhwan Salempur, where they purchased food from the local villagers. Their collective departure from their homes was marred by an attack, and a soldier retrieved a buried rifle with live rounds from a well, leading to a defensive response (Deen 2023:np).

Mr. Deen had a turbulent migration when his rural village finally found out about the quick turnaround between independence from British rule to the sudden formation of Pakistan. These experiences shaped the way he thinks about partition and how it affected their well-being.

Reflecting on the partition of India, he expressed how the Partition worsened their lives, as they had to grapple with challenges and uncertainties. One of his relatives returned to India to visit his former home, an endeavor that he too contemplated, but he lacked companions willing to undertake the journey (Deen 2023:np).

He also expresses how he wishes he could have gone back to see his hometown after being forced to move. This is a common sentiment amongst those who were forced to migrate during partition. It is not uncommon for them to miss the peace and tranquility of their childhood before partition, even if they do not always see their migration negatively.

6) 10326-Shukla Lal

Shukla Lal (née Sehgal) was born to her father, Lal Chand Sehgal, and her mother, Raj Rani Sehgal, in 1937 in Durgiana, Amritsar, East Punjab. She lived in a joint-family setup with her father's family. Her family life was filled with ups and downs even before partition. Her father and grandfather were well off, running a successful business. However, due to a stroke of bad luck, they became bankrupt and they could only pay off their debts by selling the family's jewelry.

Her story centers a lot about themes of well-being and how her family life shifted drastically due to partition. Her family went from well-off and respected to suddenly losing everything and being put into camps to survive. "At one point in time in Amritsar," she narrates that there was "not an inch of space". Issues relating to food and rationing were also felt. She

says that all of this has left a deep psychological impact on people of her generation even till today” (Lal 2023:np). Her family was extremely lucky to not be affected by violence, but they did not escape unscathed, due to the horrible living conditions, many became extremely ill and her sister passed away due to a mysterious ailment. Mrs. Lal’s mother did not handle all the bad news and sudden changes well. “She could not cope with losing her home, property, and then her sister in quick succession, and went into depression (Lal 2023:np).

7) Jatindranath Borthakur

Jatindrath Borthakur was born in Degraon, Golaghat, Assam in 1933. He belonged to an Assamese Brahmin family. His father, grandfather, and forefathers were priests of the Negheriting Shiva DouL. He states that his ancestors were brought to Assam by the Ahom kings to perform rituals in their kingdom and from then on, they remained there. Growing up, he participated in multiple freedom marches against British rule, following Mahatma Gandhi’s peaceful ideals.

He says that there was brotherhood between Muslim and Hindus in his area before partition occurred, and he states that they still live harmoniously now. What makes Mr. Borthakur’s story unique is that he talks about how he met people who killed others during the riots.

During Partition, I was in Dergaon and I heard about it from the people around.

Although Partition did not affect my area, I heard of several killings in the country. I met people who were involved in Partition killings. I asked them how they were capable of killing another person. They replied that they had to drink alcohol and spoke about how, after killing one person, it became easier to kill many. These people specially took a weapon similar to a sword called *kopida* in

Assamese. These people specifically were from the Bongaigaon area which lies close to the border. I was shocked to hear how one person can kill another (Borthakur 2025:E52).

We see from his story that people who committed violent acts seem to have suffered greatly from their own actions. Their well-being suffered due to partition and how they acted during it. Mr. Borthakur sums this up in his feelings about partition. “When Partition took place, people thought that it was going to bring peace in the country, but it didn’t and continues to bring a lot of trouble in the country. My message to the future generation is that they must learn to struggle in life. They should follow the path of non-violence because violence brings no results” (Borthakur 2025:E52).

8) Santoshmoy Chakraborty

Santoshmoy Chakraborty was born in 1929, in Noakhali in a house that was situated close to the Meghna River, and was subject to constant flooding. Eventually his family decided to move out. His childhood was economically unstable and he grew up poor and without proper footwear until he was in the ninth grade. He also grew up with asthma. As he grew up, he affiliated himself with the Communist Party, which he associated with his political awakening.

Santoshmoy Chakraborty had similar experiences to Santi Pal (discussed below) in that he witnessed both the Noakhali riots and the riots of partition.

From what I observed in my childhood, lower-class Muslims had to keep a distance from higher-class Hindus. Yet I never witnessed discrimination on the basis of religion within the academic arena. I also witnessed several horrifying events during the Noakhali riots of 1946, and heard about many others. The riots occurred in the villages during the time of Durga Puja. There were fires and

large-scale conversions. Any sign of reluctance meant death, and the women were not spared if they refused. Although the cities remained unharmed, the impending danger did not leave my mind for even a second (Chakraborty 2025:E).

Here we see very similar themes of well-being, and independence/freedom working together and shaping people's identities through force, and later via their own views as the countries continue to suffer and split.

I experienced the Partition of Bengal at the age of 18. Initially, my family stayed at a relative's place in Calcutta, and later moved to a quarter allotted to my brothers when they became government servants... . While exchanging happy and sad stories with them, I learnt that the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were not happy under the callous rule of the Khans. Such is the power of the language that even when two enemies meet in a distant land, they become friends if they speak the same language (Chakraborty 2025:E).

Freedom and Independence

The theme of freedom and independence covers people's actions and beliefs over British rule and the announcement of independence from them. It also covers personal freedoms that they may have experienced such as the ability to travel or the privilege of schooling.

1) 10829-Nasir Islam

Nasir Islam was born in 1937 In Hoshiarpur district, Haryana. His father was Aghaji Abdus Salam and his mother was Fatima. His family had migrated from Afghanistan to India, with his maternal family's living style being Pashtun (nomadic, pastoral, ethnic group residing in northwestern Pakistan and southern and eastern Afghanistan) and his home language being Farsi. He grew up in different cities and villages across India such as Hoshiarpur, Hisar, Diwani, Sirsa,

Fatehabad as his father had a transferable job. One of his sisters went to university and he considers her his role model. His maternal aunt was the first Muslim woman to go to university in Ludhiana (Islam 2023:np).

I consider this to be part of the theme of independence and freedom, as well as identity. Dr. Islam's family took great pride in their heritage. Even as they were constantly on the move, they still spoke their native language and remembered their family lifestyle and upbringing. We also see signs of their family well-being as they were well off enough to afford to send not only the boys to school, but also the girls. In fact, Dr. Islam was so inspired and proud of this fact, he even mentions how his sister, who was able to go to university, is his role model.

He recalls from his childhood, how during festivals and times of celebration that there was no deep or widespread religious animosity. "Hindus and Muslims largely worked with each other. His siblings had lifelong Hindu friends. He too had a close Hindu friend at the time. He also recounts small episodes of discrimination but says that these were ritualistic things and were a part of life" (Islam 2023:np). Sadly, these smooth relations would not last forever, as when partition was announced his family was forced to flee their home. They stayed in a camp where the living situation was so horrible he says he cannot live without modern plumbing as the latrines were so bad. When his family was finally able to leave the camp, they migrated via train to Bahawalpur and arrived at a family member's home in Lahore.

We see that even though his family was not originally from India, they were still divided and reduced simply into a religious group and were attacked and forced to migrate and flee their home. These shifts in identity may have been one of the driving forces of partition, as it created an "us vs. them" dynamic, instead of seeing them as individuals they were seen as the "other".

2) 4523- Brijrani Malholtra

Brijrani Malhotra was born in 1936 at Hannu ka Chajja in Multan, West Punjab. She was twelve years old when her family had to lock up their house and leave it forever. She expresses sadness in her oral account, that she did not know at the time that she would never see her old house ever again.

Her story went into depth about how the community got along before partition, where she describes how both the Muslim and Hindu communities got along very well, celebrating each other's festivals and holidays, as well as supporting each other's shops, claiming her family only bought milk from “a Muslim Family”.

Festivities and rituals marked great celebrations during that time, especially because they highlighted the unity among communities and people. She recalls how her family and friends used to walk to the temple to celebrate festivals and rituals. They used to attend Ramleela (enactment of the plot of Ramayana) on the occasion of Diwali, and as the festival of Dussehra approached near, they would wait eagerly for the effigies of Ravana to be burned. Her friends dressed up in peeli chunniyan (yellow scarves) on the festival of Vasant Panchami and dance around in circles, and made gudiyaan (dolls) dance – which is famously known as the “kathputli” dance (puppet dance). They used flowers and organic homemade things to prepare colors for the festival of Holi. While during the festival of Baisakhi, they would enjoy the fair being organized on the banks of Sutlej River and would dive into the water, have sumptuous paranthas (a variety of Indian flatbread), which were especially cooked and packed to be eaten after the bath (Malhotra 2018:np).

We see here she had great personal freedom at the time where she was allowed to wander without any permissions or supervision. Which could be considered unusual for a girl her age at the time. The religious differences, she says, came in only with the onset of Partition when the mobs would come with weapons and swords to threaten them to vacate their houses and to leave the place immediately. Thankfully, her migration into India went well compared to others since her family managed to get a plane ticket.

The news about Partition reached Mrs. Malhotra's family only when people from other communities started venturing inside their homes and workplaces to threaten and abduct them. Once the mass killings started, people started to run away taking almost nothing with them. She says that her family had managed to get flight tickets to India. A few of her relatives who had reached India via trains had a different experience. It turned out that the trains that carried passengers to India would halt for two to four days in the fields and jungles, where the people had no supply of food and water. People would manage their meals by tattered bits and pieces of daily ration that they were left with. She says that getting a flight ticket at that time wasn't any hassle since most of the people were migrating from Pakistan to India or vice versa. One ticket used to cost a hundred rupees.

The plan was to buy the ticket and immediately head towards the departure
(Malhotra 2018:np).

I found Mrs. Malhotra's story is important to tell as it gives us some more looks into daily life before partition and some glimpses into how the different religions got along before they were turned against one another. We see that her community goes from tight-knit to suddenly

bloodthirsty very quickly. This leads one to wonder if people got along as well as they seemed, or if the announcement of the creation of Pakistan was truly that polarizing.

Feelings on Partition

The theme of feelings surrounding partition is a quite straightforward one, at the end of the interviews a question was often asked surrounding how they felt partition was handled and any advice they had for the future generations. These accounts have strong or interesting takes on how it was handled, both good or bad.

1) Santi Priya Pal

Santi Priya Pal was born in Sahapur village in Noakhali. He doesn't remember any exact birthdate, so he was assigned a birthdate on his certificates that legally recognizes his birthdate in January 1938. He recalls stories he heard from his father about the Swadeshi movement. His large family all lived together, with parents, uncles, grandparents, five siblings, and two or three servants. After partition, a brother and sister were born.

Santi Pal experienced much hardship in his life, as he faced more than just the riots of partition. He also experienced the Noakhali riots.

I had to leave my house in 1946, due to the Noakhali riots. I think it happened because of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy (who led the Bengal Province Muslim League). I recall that on the morning of Laxmi Puja (October 1946), a mob set fire to the local market and came violently towards the neighbourhood. When we were attacked, a donation was demanded of my family and our religion was forcibly converted. We feared being forced into intercommunal marriages. Hence our family left everything behind and fled, boarding a boat to Duttapara, where Gandhi was lodged at that time. There, my family lived in an unhygienic rescue

camp for two days (Pal 2025:E86).

His well-being and identity were sadly impacted at this time due to these forced conversions that were taking place. Santi Pal went through something that also became quite common in the 1947 Partition riots as well. If people did not wish to leave their homes, or were captured by the riotous mobs, they would be forcibly converted and women would be given away into marriages. Causing loss of their freedoms and identity. His experiences of riots and violence back to back gave him a very critical view on how partition was handled.

I believe the British used the Divide and Rule policy, just like the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. After Partition, I hated the Indian National Congress for a while, as I regarded the non-unity of the leaders responsible for Partition... I do not think that India has gained true independence. I regard electoral democracy as wastage. In my opinion, the majority of people suffered from Partition, though the level of suffering and benefit from Partition varied across regions. Although my mind is scarred with the memory of violence and the losses we had to endure, I have become educated and enlightened in West Bengal. I advise future generations to learn from history and the daily events that go on in society so that they may live well in the times to come (Pal 2025:E86-87).

2) Moslem

Moslem was born in Balighati, in the Rajshahi Division. Both of his parents died when he was a child and he was raised by his eldest sister. When he became old enough, the burden fell to him to provide for his family. He was unable to go to school, but was determined that his brothers and sister would have a better childhood than his.

When partition was announced he and other Muslim families marched around their village celebrating their new found freedom, while the Hindu families became nervous and left he says. Moslem is one of many who actually believed that partition was a good thing, as he believes that it gave him more religious freedoms. Like many people though, he was appalled by the way that it was handled.

Partition was what brought about the birth of my country and the many freedoms I enjoy today, and I do not regret that aspect of history. However, the way Partition manifested and the violence that came with it is completely deplorable and I am filled with sorrow knowing the price that came with the establishment of new borders (Moslem 2025:E139).

3) Zainuddin Abdulkarim Fakhri

Zainuddin Abdulkarim Fakhri was born in March 1936 in Calcutta, West Bengal (now Kolkata). My father was an enterprising Gujarati businessman, who travelled widely before settling in Calcutta. He lived in a Muslim community within a dominantly Hindu area, but he doesn't recall any animosity between the groups. During World War II, he and his siblings were sent to family in the north as a precaution against Japanese bomb threats and they returned after the war.

Zainuddin Fakhri's experiences extend beyond the 1947 Partition on India and Pakistan and also include what experiences he faced while living in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). They moved to modern day Chattogram during partition and lived there until the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Leading up to the war, he talks about the social divides between migrants and non-migrants. "Refugees and migrants were not able to integrate into new places

after Partition and that resulted in a societal divide. At my college there were separate hostels for Bengalis and non-Bengalis” (Fakhri 2025:E160).

His example shows us that even when they were all separated by governments to be considered “same” or “together”, that people still will divide themselves due to their own perceived notions and identities.

4) Abdul Hamid

Abdul Hamid was born in Kharagpur, West Bengal, in 1939. He came from an Urdu-speaking Muslim family which had ancestral connections with Chaknaur, Patna. He remembers his locality in Kharagpur which was called Bhabanipur *mohalla* (neighborhood). In the *mohalla*, the Muslims were the majority and the communities maintained peace and harmony. Abdul Hamid recalls he used to go to the Ram *mandir* (temple) of the *mohalla* during the *pujas* (worship) and the Hindus came to his household on Eid.

His family was one that migrated to East Pakistan during partition, and this is where most of his story lies. He tells us about his time in modern day Bangladesh and about the Bangladesh Liberation War.

During the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the riots started again. Being an Urdu-speaking family, we were under constant threat of attack. We were forced to leave the railway quarters and our household was looted. Many Urdu-speaking families were murdered... My uncle and aunt along with other members of my family were killed in Saharanpur during the Liberation War. I was not even able to arrange a funeral for my relatives, I just threw their bodies inside a well in our house in Saharanpur. But the most tragic incident happened after the country was created. My family and I applied for repatriation to Pakistan. Repatriation of my

mother and my daughter, who was nine years old then, were approved but was denied for other members of our family (Hamid 2025:E174)”

Abdul Hamid recounts to us how badly identities were split due to this artificial ideas and identities were given to people after partition. I believe that it shows just how badly partition affected people. They were forcibly split into different groups by governments which caused strife and panic. These conflicting feelings didn’t go away over time either as we can see through the Bangladesh Liberation War and many of the oral histories show us just how badly they think partition was handled.

Identity

The theme of identity is a complex one as it is often created by a mixture of the other themes, but these accounts here focus a lot on how different identities interacted both before, during, and after the announcement of partition in 1947. They also focus on how identities may have changed directly due to certain events such as forced conversions or a strong embrace or rejection of their new place to live.

1) Viktor Malik

Victor Malik was born in Detroit, Michigan to an American woman, Esther May, and a Pakistani man, Mashir Malik in 1936. He then goes on to detail his life growing up in America, and then being whisked away to an English boarding school in Shimla by his dad without telling their mother. When he was in school in India, he felt the full brunt and violence of partition.

Mr. Malik’s experiences during partition were harrowing and fraught with danger. He recalled how one of his classmates at his boarding school was beheaded. He and his sister were escorted through the turmoil by an American woman, sent by his father, named Mrs. Surrey. They had to threaten their attackers by telling them they were actually American citizens, and

that they would call the Ambassador if any harm came to them. I believe that this identity of being American, yet still being attacked as they were seen as a Muslim, only to back off when told they were American, fully encapsulates the identity wars that were being carried out during partition. In fact, Mr. Malik even comments on this himself saying: “There were many Christians in Pakistan at the time and they were the only ones who seemed impervious to the political situations” (Malik 2024:W187).

My thoughts on Partition is that they should have left India alone. It was a great mistake to partition it and India would be x3 as great as it is now. But I believe that no one wants to get along now. We have so much crime no matter where you go: America, England, etc. I do not understand the motivation behind all the hatred, but I see no foreseeable solution. They thought that if they lived separately they would get peace and quiet, but it was not true. It caused millions of innocent people to die. The religious hatred between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs has gotten out of hand and ruined a paradise.

My message to future generations is that until we learn how to live peacefully with one another we will not go anywhere. As long as man insists upon killing his fellow there is no hope (Malik 2024:W187).

At the end, he gives a message to future generations, which is the final question interviewers are supposed to ask them. It is often my favorite section of each interview, as I feel you get a good look at how the person feels about society today now that we have heard everything they had to say about what happened in the past.

I chose Victor Malik to introduce this discussion of identity and partition, because of how well his story shows just how many people were affected by the turmoil of the time. Even two

American-raised children who were brought to India could not escape the violence. It helps us see and shape the narrative about how divisive this time truly was where people were angry and violent towards almost anyone they could get their hands on, women, children, Americans, and so many more.

We also see more from Mr. Malik in terms of talking about well-being and freedom/independence after partition. One example of this is when he talks about his sister moving back to America to live with their mother in 1953. “My sister moved back first because Pakistan back then was very oppressive for women and she wasn’t happy. She also hated Pakistani men and she said ‘I can’t stand the way they look at me’ ” (Malik 2024:W187). This quote shows us directly how badly it seems that women were affected after partition. Before, she had been enrolled in a boarding school, working on education, and after she felt very oppressed. There are many themes of people’s education being interrupted and even completely cut off due to the 1947 Partition.

2) 10471-Sushil Kumari Madan

Sushil Kumari Madan was born in 1936, to Harbhagwan Kumar and Shantidevi in Bhalwal, Sargodha District, Punjab, India. She grew up in a middling income family, as her father ran a grocery store, meaning she had the chance to go to her local temple for schooling growing up. She looks back fondly at this time as she reminisced about the food her mother used to send her off to schooling with. “The food, she says, was simple, and consisted of chapatis, a vegetable, and a daal (a dish made using seeds such as chickpeas and lentils). She remembers that in the evenings, sabzis (dishes made of cooked vegetables) and daals were placed on a cement slab on the first-floor courtyard. Here they would all gather for meals” (Madan 2023:np),

She makes a point to mention that in her early childhood, there was no strife in Bhalwal.

A good portion of the population was Muslim and she recounts that her family doctor was even a Muslim. This was important to her, because when partition started, she found her neighbors rallying around her family to help them in this tough time.

Some of her Muslim neighbors, she says, were immensely helpful to them. They put them in tongas (animal drawn carts) and saw that they reached Sargodha safely. Sargodha was the airport where the migration flights were. Her family was not able to fly to Delhi, though they went every day to attempt to find tickets. Her uncle was in Sargodha, so the family stayed with him during this time. The family ended up traveling in trucks from Sargodha to Faisalabad, and then to Lahore, where they stayed in a refugee camp for two nights. At the camp, they received rations and wood to light fires to cook in the chulhas (stoves). Her family was lucky, and two days later they were given army vehicles to travel ahead to Amritsar. The family started to migrate at the end of August (Madan 2023:np).

Mrs. Madan bounced from Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai throughout her life after migration. It took her family until 1961 to receive compensation for the house and land they lost back in Bhalwal, where they finally received 8000 rupees and a plot of land. This was part of a plan between India and Pakistan to compensate those who lost everything due to partition, but for many it came far too late afterwards, and did not make up for what they had lost. Mrs. Madan had started her MBBS (bachelors in medicine and surgery) degree by that time, and her family had already settled down and found new jobs. She reflects this with her last statement when asked about how she thought partition had been handled.

Reflecting on Partition, she does think that things could have been conducted in a smoother, better planned manner. Godse was the governor at the time, and she

says he ensured protection as they moved in trucks from Sargodha to Lahore.

Her general advice to future generations is to stand the burden in the face of wars and disasters. She says things need to be managed within available circumstances, because ‘where will you run?’ (Madan 2023:np).

Her themes of well-being and identity shaped her ideas of partition and how it was handled.

People's identities did not stop them from helping others in her story, but she was also upset by the lack of help from both governments, causing unnecessary suffering and harm to people's well-being.

3) Arjun Verma

Arjun Verma was born in Rangoon (now Yangon) in Burma (now Myanmar) in 1929. His father was a timber merchant who had settled in Burma as his grandfather had been posted there by the Government of India and his family decided to settle down there. His house in Burma was made of wood thanks to his father's profession. They had a huge verandah in their house where his mother had placed a Guru Granth Sahib following her religious beliefs.

Mr. Verma grew up studying and going to school in Rangoon until war broke out in 1941, when they were bombed by the Japanese. That is when his father decided to move their family back to India for safety. He resumed his schooling in his ninth standard in Gujranwala. During this time, he also spoke out against British Rule and joined pro-Hindu groups.

He had gone to study in Lahore when Partition broke out, and here we see a grim and sad example of how partition set people apart simply by splitting religions into separate identities and then pitting them against each other. “One incident I particularly remember is that I was roaming with a group of students and we spotted a Muslim boy. We went up to him and stabbed him, without any reason. This is one incident I still regret” (Verma 2025:E30).

Summary

Through the interviewees' experiences we see how intertwined the themes are in each other and how each separate theme contributes towards the person's identity. The most common intersection of themes is well-being and identity, with both of them often shaping the other.

Well-being we often see shaping identity more as people experienced tragedy, violence, culture shock after migrating, causing changes in how they once perceived themselves. Identity can also shape well-being occasionally as we see in cases of forced conversion. This can also tie into the theme of independence and freedoms, we see as people's freedoms change, such as losing access to schooling or having their religion forcibly changed caused identity shifts. Changes in well-being and freedoms also would shape their current view of partition and how it was handled.

These seventeen stories show us how differently people were affected by the same event. Some are quite glad that partition occurred as it gave them a religious land for themselves, while others saw it as a mishandling from the government, or even a complete mistake altogether. No one story is quite the same even when they share common themes. These themes of independence, well-being, and thoughts surrounding partition all blend together to create their identity and we see how some people's identities shifted or stayed the same due to the riots and migrations caused by the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan, as well as, the Bangladesh Liberation War.

Chapter 6: Analysis of Violence and Identities

After reading through all 17 oral history transcripts and summaries, we can begin to analyze the emerging themes and the impacts that they have made on the person's life. These accounts and their themes of well-being, freedoms and independence, feelings about partition and identity also help make connections and create understandings on how the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan occurred, as well as, how it affected those who experienced it.

Sudden violence after partition

The first step is to use quotes and excerpts from these transcripts and summaries to understand how partition occurred. This includes the idea that stories and narratives affected partition and its violence. This is because the announcement of the country of India suddenly splitting, should not have caused so much violence on its own. How did people become so angry at perceived "other" groups so quickly? One such example of this is in Mrs. Brijrani Malholtra's summary. For her family, they only became aware of partition when people from the surrounding area began to go into people's homes and places of work and threatened to kill them (Malholtra 2018:np). This sudden violence often contradicts their own story, where they always remember it being very peaceful, and noting that everyone from all identities got along. She describes her childhood as peaceful and how people got along well, with a note of how they always celebrated each other's festivals, and even bought milk from a Muslim family. We see a village go from supposedly tight-knit and friendly to suddenly threatening each other over the announcement of the creation of Pakistan.

Another such example of a friendly community and neighborhood suddenly becoming rife with violence is Mrs. Sushil Kumari Madan. She recalled how well her community got along at the time and remembered no tensions or strife before the announcement of partition, saying

that her family doctor was even Muslim. She was extremely lucky unlike some other villages, where her community banded together to help those that had to emigrate. Her Muslim neighbors helped them draw up their *tongas* (animal drawn carts) in order for them to flee from other villages who may be coming to start violence, to safety. Here again we see a common theme where everyone got along until partition, where violence seems to erupt out of nowhere. This is where the question must be asked if there were any pieces or memories missing from these accounts.

In one transcript, Mr. Santoshmoy Chakraborty, recalls something slightly different than the previous two. In his transcript, we see him talk about class and race distinctions between people at the time. He remembers that lower-class Muslims would stay away from upper-class Hindu areas, but he mentions that he never saw any violence at the time. This brings up the idea that there were most likely underlying tensions between different identities due to perceived or systemic inequalities. This idea is also backed up by people who actually supported and were glad for the creation of Pakistan, such as Moslem, who is glad for the religious freedoms he experiences.

These differences between recountings of the time before the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan cause a lot of confusion and debate, as everyone states that there was peace between multiple groups of people and a spectrum of different identities, only for it to all quickly unravel with the announcement of partition. One such idea as to why there was such a catastrophic reaction to partition may have been there were underlying tensions between groups that identified differently along political, religious, or ethnic lines that came to a boil over with the announcement. We see this in the accounts of people who were older around the time of partition, whereas the younger ones may have only seen peace. Another such idea was that

singular narratives of events and from specific groups may have been created either by accident or potentially on purpose by governments to drive a split in between identities and groups of people, to allow for the partitioning of people to be easier, but perhaps with unintended consequences.

Another narrative that backs up what Mr. Chakraborty may have been witnessing, is an author named Yasmin Khan. She dives into an analysis on how she believes that the violence may have occurred. Khan references Jinnah's speech on what is called Direct Action day, where he called upon Muslims to celebrate and support the announcement of the creation of Pakistan. "Jinnah called on his followers 'to conduct themselves peacefully and in a disciplined manner' although his own usually precise and legalistic prose was vague enough to allow for violent reinterpretation" (Khan 2017:63). However, with this announcement from Jinnah, Hindus also created their own plans to defend themselves, retaliate, or even strike first against Muslims who may participate in this Direct Action day. This analysis supports the idea that we see from Mr. Chakraborty's perspective, where tensions were most likely running high for a while before finally bubbling over due to the announcement of the creation of Pakistan.

Singular Narratives and Propaganda

The violence of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan was a sudden occurrence since just a few days before they had been celebrating their freedom from British rule. Explored above was the first idea as to why partition became so violent so suddenly, and to show people's experiences and documented peace with each other. However, another explanation could be the fact that stories or narratives were being spread that may have caused outbreaks of violence, for instance, if there was a story of violence or a riot affecting one identity group, so they retaliate with violence of their own against others.

This kind of narrative can be extremely dangerous and is seen in certain oral history accounts from people such as Mr. Arjun Verma and Mr. Jatindranath Borthakur. Arjun Verma recounts the time he was out in the city streets with his friends, and without warning or any reason he remembers behind it, they stabbed a boy. He expresses regret about this fact many years later. For Jatindranath Borthakur, he recalled how he spoke to people who had participated in killings, asking how they had been able to do so. The responses he got, he says, were how after killing one person, they found it easier to kill more, but they also remarked how they must drink alcohol to deal with it now. These accounts show us how easily swayed people were into violence against perceived “others”, something that can sadly still be seen today.

Singular narratives can also be harmful by painting false narratives. One such narrative comes from Mrs. Razia Sultana, where she talks about ruling periods and how everything was perfect and peaceful during that time. While this may have been the case for her, she makes a broad, sweeping assumption for everyone else by claiming that “Nizam rule was a golden period.” (Sultana, 2023:np). The issue with broad statements like this is that it does not account for everyone’s lived experiences. While this peace and “golden period” may have been true for her, it is highly likely that people did struggle and suffer during the Nizam’s rule. This is a prime example of a singular narrative. Where there is only one person telling their side of the story, with none to tell other sides or contradict or even to support their claims. However, getting narratives to contradict or support other oral histories can be quite difficult as everyone perceives events and time periods differently.

The danger of singular narratives is that it can be twisted into propaganda. What this means is that one person’s story is taken and purposely used to push ideas or beliefs by political, religious, or other identity groups. This propaganda can play into certain themes such as

nationalism or fear. We see such examples of this today with the brief fighting between Pakistan and India in May 2025 where they exchanged strikes upon the other. Propaganda is used to sway public support for government actions that can cause direct harm to both them and the “others” that they are being rallied against. Razia Sultana’s narrative could be used to push a nationalist ideal while Arjun Verma and Jatindranath Borthakur’s narratives could be used to cause fear and panic.

The 1947 Partition Archive did their best to avoid pushing narratives by getting as many stories and experiences from as many different perspectives and identities as possible: Muslim, Hindu, Christian, upper-class, lower-class, etc. This way, no side can accuse the Archive of favoring one identity over the other.

How Identity Differs

As much as identity is discussed and how important it is to most people, identity is not a straight line. It moves beyond religion or nationality, with multiple people still fondly remembering their homelands and continuing those traditions from before migration, or even being forcibly converted to another religion to avoid being killed. For many people, migration and partition split their identity from an identity they grew up with, to having another one forced upon them.

One such example of identity not being straightforward is Mr. Santi Priya Pal, who sadly had his religion forcibly converted during the Noakhali riots of 1946. During that time, a mob came through their village setting fires and in order to be spared, his family converted. However, they managed to flee to Comilla (now in modern day Bangladesh) in order to save their families from forced intercommunal marriages. They were then forced to flee to West Bengal again a year later during partition. He experiences many different pressures against his identity during a short

period of time, emigrating multiple times in a year-long period and going through a forced conversion, and he still managed to complete his education and not lose himself or his path.

Another person whose identity shows us just how strong connections to our homeland can be is Manohar Thakurdas Chugh. He grew up in the Sindh region before migrating to Mumbai during partition. In Mumbai, his family had to learn Hindi in order to work and survive. Later in life he then moved to Hong Kong and discovered a small Sindhi community there. Nowadays, he continues to practice his native language of Sindhi and has even taught his children how to speak the language even though they live in Hong Kong. Here we see how someone's identity is still connected to the one they grew up with. Even through many trials and tribulations, Mr. Chugh's identity has not faltered. He has kept up his practices, language, and traditions throughout his entire life, even when no longer living in the Sindh region.

The final example of identity not just being an assigned nationality or religion is Mr. Zainuddin Abdulkarim Fakhri. In his oral history transcript, he talks about what it was like to live in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after partition and how identities were still split even though they were all technically considered Pakistani. He mentions how places were segregated into Bengali and non-Bengali areas, causing issues with integration between the migrants and Bengalis. This separation between supposed "same" identities was a contributing factor for the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh. Mr. Chugh shows us that even though identities should be considered "same" that people did see enough differences between themselves to cause another outbreak of violence in order to finally be officially split.

Summary

Identities are not simply religions or nationalities that can be assigned by governments or official announcements. They are how people feel about themselves or the area or religion they

feel most connected to. Throughout violence and emigration we see people hold on to their identities through forced conversion, multiple moves and relocations, and even the split in identities between groups that have been lumped together by the governments, such as the people of Bangladesh and Pakistan. These classes of identities being forced upon people no doubt caused confusion and violence that added to the turbulent time of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan and even led to the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.

However, through identity we can see how this may have not been the only factor that added to the sudden outbreak of riots and killings during that time. Singular narratives and stories may have made rounds through cities in neighborhoods that pushed fear and retaliatory violence throughout communities. Another explanation for the sudden violence may also have been that some people due to age or class, may have simply missed the rising tensions between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.

With this widespread violence and the devastation partition caused, it is important to touch on one more topic. The trauma that lasted long after partition was over can be seen in interviews where one person's mom had to be locked in their house as she could not accept the reality of what happened to her family. People also mentioned that they dealt with the trauma and violence by drinking. At the end of interviews, interviewees were often asked if they had advice for future generations, and this may be one way to help the next generations avoid the same trauma they went through, or to help those who have been affected by generational trauma.

Chapter 7: Conclusion:

Oral storytelling is an extremely important aspect of history that has been overlooked during much of archaeology's history. In the more recent years, we have seen more intersection between different subdisciplines such as cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology, which has led to a greater interest in oral storytelling and personal accounts of historic times becoming more important to document and preserve. The mission of the 1947 Partition Archive reflects this new era of historic preservation, as they recognize that the survivors of the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan are only getting older and may not be around much longer to share their experiences with us.

These oral histories are one of the few ways for historians to be able to understand the scale of the tragedies that occurred in August of 1947. Even beyond the historical preservation and research work, it can help families understand what previous generations have gone through and even teach them something about their family history that they may have never known. In fact, the 1947 Partition Archive even encourages this with one of the final questions being asked in the interview often being if they have any advice for future generations. Oral history is a great tool for research, but it can also be a powerful tool for understanding and learning more about where your family came from.

This thesis was meant to explore these oral histories to find unique and common themes amongst them. To then analyze these themes to ask the questions: How did the sudden changes in people's well-being and personal freedoms from the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan affect their identity? In turn, how did these changes shape their feelings surrounding partition? These thesis questions can be answered through looking through the oral history transcripts and summaries from interviewees. Using coding techniques on the seventeen oral histories, allowed

me to come up with four themes and definitions for them as shown in Table 4.1. They are well-being, independence and freedoms, feelings about partition, and identity. Each oral history had aspects of themes from all four, but were sorted into categories based upon which theme was the most prominent in their story.

Through analyzing these themes, we begin to see how these different experiences cause identities to differ, even when they are being labelled as a homogenous group. Examples of this are Sindhis who migrated during partition, but still identify as Sindhi instead of Indian. Another such example being the people of Bangladesh, who even when they were partitioned into East Pakistan in 1947, considered themselves a different group altogether, which eventually led to the 1971 Liberation War. Also seen from these oral histories, is the use of these different identities in order to call people to action, as seen in the call for Direct Action day from Jinnah, and the responses from Hindus and Sikhs.

We can also see just how intertwined these themes are with how well-being and independences and freedoms shape identities, but also how these formed identities reflect on how they feel about how partition was handled. There is such a vast array of experiences and identities, that the seventeen oral histories analyzed do not cover every possible experience. As we see, some people embraced their new identities willingly and rejoiced in the fact that a new country was created. Others think it was a complete misstep on the government's end that was unnecessary, and caused violence and bloodshed for no reason.

This ties into my belief that identity spans further than just nationality or religion and we can see this echoed in some of the oral history accounts. This idea is reflected in a definition given by Ashcroft et al, on page 216. “For some, post-nationalism is a way forward into ways of rethinking identity based on ways of defining common human values rather than on territorial

identities that is a vital response to the changing conditions of the twenty-first century”. The most common intersection of themes is well-being and identity, with both of them often shaping the other. Well-being we often see shaping identity more as people experienced tragedy, violence, culture shock after migrating, causing changes in how they once perceived themselves.

Through the lens of their identity and how it was shaped by well-being, independence and freedoms, and their feelings surrounding partition, we can begin to understand why sudden violence may have arisen so quickly in August of 1947 and why these feelings have carried into the modern day.

One drawback to this thesis is its sample size. With a sample of only seventeen oral history transcripts and summaries, there is room for error and potentially missed themes, as well as, difficulty in accurately projecting these findings onto larger samples. It is harder to draw universal conclusions that can accurately reflect a larger group of people’s experiences or feelings. Another drawback to oral histories in this thesis is bias in each oral history. This is due to the fact that with such a polarizing event, people may often point blame at each other. In order to mitigate the bias from these sources, multiple people from different religions and regions were selected so that as many experiences and perspectives were analyzed as possible.

Even with the drawbacks, the importance of preserving oral histories is too much to ignore. They offer glimmers of insight that physical artifacts could never give us. They offer a way for the past to be preserved in living memory and through a medium that everyone can access. It also helps keep the memory alive for the loved ones around them, with a piece that they can hold onto forever. Allowing us to see each person’s unique identity and help us to understand what experiences helped shape them into the person they became later on. As well as, seeing the impact both good and bad, that such events had on both the individual interviewee and

their family. Through the lens of their identity and how it was shaped by well-being, independence and freedoms, and their feelings surrounding partition, we can begin to understand why sudden violence may have arisen so quickly in August of 1947 and why these feelings have carried into the modern day. Through the archiving and preservation of these oral histories we can begin to understand the current and past political decisions and how they have shaped people's identities for decades.

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