



FAMILIAL TRAUMA AND INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY IN THE PARTITION PROJECT: A PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY

Mudassir Ullah Khan
Madykatikhel@gmail.com

PhD Scholar, Department of English, Muslim Youth University
Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr. Faiz Sultan
Faizsultanphdnuml@gmail.com

Assistant Professor, Department of English, National University of
Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract

This study examines familial trauma and intergenerational memory in Saadia Faruqi's *The Partition Project* (2024), focusing on how inherited histories of displacement shape identity and belonging. It explores the grandmother–granddaughter relationship through which Dadi's memories of Partition become meaningful to Maha, a Pakistani American adolescent. The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and literary-analytical design, employing close reading and thematic analysis. Its theoretical framework brings Cathy Caruth's account of traumatic representation into critical dialogue with Ruth Leys's examination of trauma theory, supported by Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory. The analysis suggests that familial remembrance broadens Maha's understanding of belonging while preserving the distinction between the survivor's direct experience and the descendant's mediated engagement. Storytelling and documentary representation facilitate historical preservation but also generate tensions concerning privacy, consent, trust, and ownership of testimony. Maha's increasing concern for the people represented in her documentary indicates a developing recognition of these ethical responsibilities. The study concludes that intergenerational memory contributes to identity formation through interpretation and relational engagement, while responsible remembrance requires respect for the survivor's authority. It offers a psychosocial reading of familial memory as both a historical inheritance and an ethical responsibility.

Keywords: *Documentary Representation, Familial Trauma, Identity, Intergenerational Memory, Partition, Postmemory, Psychosocial Exploration*

Corresponding Author: Mudassir Ullah Khan (PhD Scholar, Department of English, Muslim Youth University Islamabad, Pakistan)

Email: atikhel@gmail.com

1. Introduction and Background of the Study

This paper examines familial trauma, intergenerational memory, and identity formation in Saadia Faruqi's *The Partition Project* (2024) from a psychosocial perspective. It explores how experiences of displacement from one generation to the next, make sense in a parent's family, and influence their child's sense of self and their understanding of history and belonging. The study is based on Cathy Caruth's account of traumatic experience (1996) and Ruth Leys's criticism of trauma theory (2000). In addition to these viewpoints, Marianne Hirsch (2008) suggests the idea of postmemory in order to differentiate between survivors' remembrances and descendants' mediated encounters with the past. In combination, they provide a framework for examining trauma's implicit expression, memory, and intergenerational legacy in relations with groups or families, focusing on its production across generations.

Trauma is a significant topic in literary studies, and one in which the connection between the transcending experience and its subsequent expression is questioned. Caruth (1996) looks at how "traumatic experience disrupts clear links between an event, understanding of it, and representation of it" in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Her approach considers the interplay of knowledge and ignorance, the knowing and not knowing that drives stories of suffering, one by leaning on psychoanalysis, and another in the turns of literature. In the context of the current project, this tends to focus discussion on the availability of the past through narration and the interpretation that may result from the narration.

But trauma is not a static category that is "pure," uncontested and unambiguous. Leys (2000) outlines the intellectual genealogy of the concept and considers differences in psychological, medical and cultural analyses of traumatic experience in *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Theories of trauma have unfolded from divergent memory, subjectivity and representation ideas, which her analysis reveals. The present paper thus does not assume the same understanding of Caruth and Leys, but does get them into critical dialogue. Caruth provides questions on the challenges of representing experience, and Leys asks to examine the assumptions leading to the interpretation of experience. Does not imply to anyone that all narrative silences, emotional restraints, and disagreements between family members are signs of trauma.

In the context of this research, familial trauma means the effect and fallouts of historically caused suffering in familial relationships and experiences. The word does not mean the family is responsible for the original injury. Rather, it argues that the family can be a space where memories of violence and a sense of displacement can be remembered, transmitted, misinterpreted or ignored. The analytical concern is then the question of how historical experience gets into families. In addition, you have to separate older family members from younger ones, resulting in their different understanding of that experience.

Involvement of the emotions such as an ancestral history does not justify the assumption on its own that the descendant of a clinical disorder has inherited it.

Intergenerational memory provides a way of examining this distinction. In utilizing the term “postmemory,” Hirsch (2008) refers to the later generation’s “sogrity” that functions through stories, images, and behaviour, and encompasses experiences that happened before their own birth. A relation like this one does engage imagination but no autobiographical memory. Represented in the present paper, postmemory can be used to examine the issue of a granddaughter being engrossed in a grandmother’s history while not being a part of the same events. The difference can help maintain the value of inherited remembrance while at the same time not making the descendant the witness to someone else’s suffering.

Hirsch also delves into the idea that intergenerational remembrance entails moral principles in cultural representation in his later work. In *The Generation of Postmemory*, she explores how the children of the Holocaust find ways to “write” and “image” catastrophic histories as they confront the possibility of appropriating those they were not. This is of significant concern, especially with a documentary type storytelling analysis. Choosing what to include, what not to include, and whose eyes to see it through, are amongst the choices that must be made in preserving a family account. The present paper therefore takes a different perspective on memory transmission as an ethical relationship in which the memory survivor is not only the subject, but also the authority on the memory and the descendant is the active one who desires to apprehend and/or document it.

The study has a history of the British India Partition, in 1947. Its impact on the creation of nations extends to disrupting homes, communities and family relationships. *The Other Side of Silence* by Urvashi Butalia, is an important document to consider this personal side. Butalia (2000) draws attention in the interviews and documentary evidence to individual experiences especially those of women, children, and marginalized communities. Her work testifies to the need for historical knowledge to be concerned with the personal impact of political turmoil, the need to turn to sources that may not feature prominently in national histories.

However, Butalia also makes clear the role of silence as a parameter in the investigation; it does not necessarily represent the lack of memory. Her investigation brings into dialogue the challenges of discussing Partition and personal and family histories (Butalia, 2000). This begs the question in this present study about the conditions of testimony: who asks, who hears, and how is the testimony heard. Being close to a survivor does not mean he or she has to understand. So remembrance needs to be considered in terms of those interactions that make a story accessible, not as a thing which may be sustained from generation to generation.

The concerns are relevant to *The Partition Project*. In its novel, Faruqi details Mahnoor (aka Maha), whose grandmother Dadi arrives in the family's home in Houston from Pakistan. Maha carries out her documentary work and the focus of the conversations connect to Dadi's childhood in northern India; her move to Pakistan during Partition (Faruqi, 2024). The theme of the story therefore intersects the interests of the modern teenage protagonist and the experiences of an older family member's history. Provides an opportunity to look at the transformation of something distant to something personal or impactful through family interaction.

The psychosocial orientation of this paper is related to the link between the understanding and self-understanding of the individual and the social context in which the latter evolves. It is here presented as a process of negotiation, an engagement with a relationship of family, inheritance and the current situation. The crux of the issue is the nature of the impact that Maha's knowledge of Dadi's experience could have on her family and self. This doesn't mean that the granddaughter is affected by these events if her grandmother suffered in the past. Rather it offers a consideration of the ways in which remembrance can be one powerful way in the life of an individual who has multiple relationships, commitments, and wills.

The grandmother-granddaughter relationship also allows us the possibility of addressing differences in the family. The familiarity of historical distance and the contrastive attitudes of the old and the young due to difference in age and circumstance can create an attitude of content or inattentiveness with respect to memory and the representation of memory. Historical distance can cause lack of familiarity and differences in age and circumstance can cause a divergence in content or sentiment on what should be remembered, how to remember it, and how it ought to be represented. The present study therefore examines if the junior character is affected by the testimony in his/her perception of the senior character. It questions what might happen when people think of their relative's former life and its potential to undermine the focus on recognition from a current family role. It is important that such questions bring into the study of memory and empathy in an understandable way, but they also leave room for false understanding and conflicting perspectives.

Documentary mediation introduces a further dimension to this inquiry. The novel's educational guide identifies a conflict scenario where Dadi feels let down when he finds out that Maha has secretly recorded the conversations on the video for a documentary without his permission. First this episode serves as a ground for understanding the importance of keeping testimony and honoring the person who is giving it. The comment provided here is to suggest the following interpretation: Family connection alone does not give permission for others' memories to circulate. Historic experience can only be passed

from one person to another if there is an authority, trust and responsibility. between them; between speaker and listener(s); between themselves; between two or more pairs of them.

The present paper therefore derives the common concerns of the Mudassir Ullah Khan's thesis into a focused one. It explores the link between historical trauma and the current identity via familial memory in one novel. Its function is to 'connect' these challenges to the representation of traumatic experience, to memory and postmemory, as well as the tasks and ethics of recording the testimony of family members. Instead of assuming that people's lives will be restored by the story, the research addresses what change can be said to happen when people share their remembrance, what tensions might be aroused and what is not understood by the descendant.

The Partition Project is explored as a story of the past, of interpretation and of responsibility. It is argued that an ancestral past comes into meaning as a relationship that affords a negotiation of connection and difference. Familial memory can broaden a descendant's understanding of belonging, but responsible engagement requires recognizing that the survivor's experience remains distinct. This framework supports a psychosocial exploration of how testimony links generations while preserving the authority and particularity of the person whose history is being remembered.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To examine how familial trauma and intergenerational memory shape identity and belonging in *The Partition Project*.
2. To analyze how storytelling and documentary representation mediate the transmission of Partition memories within the grandmother–granddaughter relationship in *The Partition Project*.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How do familial trauma and intergenerational memory shape identity and belonging in *The Partition Project*?
2. How do storytelling and documentary representation mediate the transmission of Partition memories within the grandmother–granddaughter relationship in *The Partition Project*?

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examines how familial trauma and intergenerational memory contribute to the negotiation of identity in Saadia Faruqi's *The Partition Project*. The research focuses on the relationship between a Partition survivor and her granddaughter, making a link between the outcomes of displacement in the past and living with Grandchildren in the present. It looks at the ways we make a tragic or triumphant time meaningful to those who were not there to experience the actual event(s). This focus is an ancillary aspect of Mudassir Ullah Khan's thesis, which deals with the

connection between suffering of the society, one's personal experience, memory, and identity within the family.

The theoretical importance of the research is its attempt to engage trauma theory in dialogue with the research on intergenerational remembrance. Cathy Caruth, Ruth Leys continue to be the major theoretical counterparts, and Marianne Hirsch's idea of "postmemory" can be used in conjunction with the analysis of inherited history. These views help the study to discriminate between the survivor's memories and the descendant's mediated interactions with them. The research therefore does not presume that later generations suffer psychological harms from the same as those suffered by their ancestors.

Methodologically, the connection between the analysis of family relations and the analysis of narrative mediation is made. Their concern is not just about what Dadi can remember but also what she experiences, is received by her, and is represented. The involvement in storytelling and documentary recording opens the questions of how the preservation of the past and personal authority can coincide. The study thus takes into account the obligation to document family history, as it can lead to questions of trust, permission, and dealing with the suffering of another person.

Inspirationally, the research engages a modern Pakistani-American story in the broader discussion of the ongoing relevance of Partition. The scholarship on Partition illustrates that territorial divisions and boundaries did not just exist in isolation, but that displacement impacted relationships and citizenship, gender and daily life, among others. Through the prism of the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter, these issues are explored in a literary context as a way to get a concentrated look into how history can continue to resonate across time and space.

This study also contributes to the debate on identity with respect to the subject of remembrance as a relational process. It looks at how the experience of family history can influence the sense of belonging of a younger character rather than assuming that it is simply an expression of one's ancestry. With this method, uncertainty, disagreement and competing attachments are okay. It acknowledges that the burden of the past can be incorporated as a significant part of one's past identity without being one's sole identity.

Finally, interpretive context for scholars and students studying contemporary South Asian fiction and family stories and memory studies. The review of its testimony and representation in the documentation can help with additional literary research on the roles associated with the tasks of maintaining own accounts. Its contribution is interpretive: it explains how a fictional narrative negotiates remembrance and identity, without claiming to establish clinical outcomes or universal patterns of trauma transmission.

2. Literature Review

The present study draws on scholarship concerning trauma, collective memory, Partition, oral testimony, and mediated remembrance. The two research questions that are central to this work, namely “how familial trauma and intergenerational memory are written into identity” and “how storytelling and documentary representation are instrumental to this inheritance,” are addressed in these fields. The historical and conceptual works reviewed in prior sections outline concepts and historical background for reading *The Partition Project*. They are not introduced as the studies of Faruqi’s novel that has already taken place.

The theoretical knowledge is linked to the thesis structure. The dangers that face those with traumatic experiences coming into the realm of understanding and representation are explored by Caruth (1996), and the conflicting historiographic positions of trauma theory are investigated by Leys (2000). Hirsch (2012) pushes the conversation forward to those who have come after us and are dealing with histories that are not our own, but are other peoples’. Their relationship is productive, yet it is also essential – the study should look into the mediation of suffering but it is not a monolithic or uniform psychological mediation.

In order to further explore remembrance within social relations, Maurice Halbwachs’s *On Collective Memory* forms a basis. Halbwachs (1992) discusses the recollection from the point of view of the social contexts that enable people to remember the past. He questions the exclusive privatization of memory, paying attention to the contexts of remembering, the groups in which remembering takes place. This method can be adopted for the purposes of this current research in order to explore the family as a site that shapes the intelligibility of historical experience. Differences between the memories overtaken by Dadi and the memory acquired by Maha, however, must not be overlooked in the social construct of memory. Though they were sharing the same family, the relationships with Partition remain different in them.

In *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, Jan Assmann (2011) builds on the connection between memory and the construction of self-understanding and identity in both the physical and symbolic world. His analysis of remembering and political vision transcends the issue of personal memory to explore ways in which communities can relate to their own past. While he cannot quite be said to have a contemporary Partition story, his methodology provides reflections on the nature of the inter-personal memory and the enduring cultural representation of the Partition. In Faruqi’s novel, these questions revolve around the interplay of the family account with a documentary with a readership beyond the domesticity of the family.

The book by Aleida Assmann *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization* is a study on cultural memory, as the fundamental memory for the cultural communities of the West

(Aleida Assmann, 2011). Her work brings an additional kind of view to the multiples of preservation and accessibility of the forms. The question of the distinction between a living conversation and a document or a recording, which might spread away from its context, is germane to the present paper. The study explores the distinction and asks about the modification to the conditions of reception that occurs when the document goes into ontological materiality. This distinction forms the basis for the study to ask what happens when the document enters ontological materiality? It is possible to prolong an account's life by preserving it, but what remains unanalysed is the possibility that preserving an account would also stand in for the speaker and context.

In *Memory in Culture* Astrid Erll (2011) collects sociological, psychological, literary and media approaches to remembering. Her research recognizes media and literature as key instrument yardsticks in the process of studying cultural memory. This interdisciplinary orientation is helpful because the orientation to remembrance in this document is discovered in two ways: the interaction between families and the activity of a document. Erll's strategies focus on the medium - the way a story reaches its audience. For the present study, representation of documents is thus treated as an emerging process rather than as a clear receptacle for the pre-given information and unchangeable context.

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra addresses the issues trauma has for historical understanding and representation, such as the importance of post-traumatic testimony (LaCapra, 2001). His work highlights the interconnection of accounts of suffering with how it is understood by others, and is important in this respect. This is because it is relevant to the difference between Dadi's experience and Maha's answer to that experience. The current research is an attempt to explore this concern and investigate the possibility of a listener recognising suffering whilst being aware of her own limited access to it. To care about an incident/event with emotional involvement does not mean that the survivor's experience is being asserted.

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) discuss testimony in the context of memory, witnessing, literature and psychoanalysis. They engage historical accounts in the work of listening and ethical responsiveness. The significance to this paper is to look at testimony as a pedagogical event between the speaker and the recipient. Together, the associated questions can be explored here in Maha's role, the responses that she receives, and their uses. While Felman and Laub are primarily concerned with Holocaust testimony, neither work equates the subsequent tragic historical events with one another, nor is the discussion of listening mutually exclusive to this study.

Alessandro Portelli (1991) does so through his analysis of the form and meaning of oral history, how people remember their own histories, and the process of making a remembered life meaningful. He also takes into account the influence of the encounter between researcher and narrator on the production of the story. This is helpful for

understanding relationship interchanges: Dadi talks to his grandmother (Maha), in a specific relationship, and also in shift of how (she) tells the story. Thus, both the remembered experience, as well as the conditions of the narration is included in the present research. This is not an attack on testimony as 'taken with a pinch of salt' but an understanding that account means the function and purpose of the account.

Remembering Partition by Gyanendra Pandey explores the nexus of violence, history, memory and making community. For violent events, Pandey (2001) studies how they are remembered and how they are forgotten via means of helping in building collective identities. His work provides an historical reference against which to consider the link between individual memories and national narratives of Partition. In this present research it raises questions about simplified descriptions of historical divisions, and how a grandmother's remembered experience might complicate these simple descriptions. The research therefore handles the account given by Dadi as a specific one and in no way makes it representative of the experiences of all survivors.

Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin (1998) explore Partition through the perspectives of women, their memories and the connection between gender and nationality. Their work brings the women into the historical picture, does not deny their importance in political change, nor does it ignore them. This certainly applies to a novel where the older woman is recounting the events to the younger before her. It motivates the present study to examine the difference, if any, between the gender and authority and reception in family. But the manner and ways of their actions as mentioned by Menon and Bhasin should not be called Dadi's behaviour, it must be backed up with quotes and passages from the novel.

In the context of Partition, as well as the anti-Sikh violence of 1984, Veena Das (2007) in *Life and Words* looks at violence and its connection to everyday life. Her work is significant for its weaving together and perspectives on the links between great historical events and lived experience. The present research supports the orientation of this family, the family interaction focus, rather than focusing only on explicit description of catastrophes. What is the significance of history in the common relationships is the pertinent question here. It also has to distinguish between tensions that have historical roots and the normal disagreements, rather than assuming that all domestic conflicts reveal history trauma.

Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar (2007) explores Partition in the forms of refugees, boundaries, and by the ways India and Pakistan were defined as modern states. In this archive, she has brought together both the documents and the oral narratives-from families separated in Delhi, which go along with Karachi. Affecting this is the personal displacement of the displacement in the midst of continual political and administrative advancements. It offers an historical cudgel to any texts that strip Partition away to just an internal psychological wound. The work of Zamindar in the present study points to the

study of remembered displacement as an experience that is defined by the borders and institutions, while the novel provides evidence of the particular embodiment of this experience in family.

The generational lens of the study is particularly apt for taking into account *The Footprints of Partition* by Anam Zakaria. Zakaria (2015) explores the perception of Partition and across the border communities through the four generations of Pakistanis and Indians. Her work indicates that rather than a shared and universal inherited “reading”, there are differences in intergenerational remembrance. This gives a helpful perspective in the context of Dadi and Maha. The relationship may be explored as a negotiation between different historical positions, in which the younger speaker takes up, questions and reinterprets an account rather than merely restating it.

Michael Rothberg (2009) connects Holocaust memory and postcolonial histories by combining notions of multidirectional memory. His work provides an insight into other ways of thinking about how different knowledge’s can connect without competing for recognition in its entirety. In the case of the current work, this adds a strand of questions regarding the meaning that a family history can have for audiences beyond that family. Such linkages should be aware that there are historical differences. Rothberg’s framework is thus not an argument for imagining the novel’s overall potentialities for enacting a sense of solidarity among all the groups in the novel, but rather as a contextual support for discursively considering those potentialities in this instance.

Alison Landsberg (2004) explores the potential of mass-cultural technologies to help people form meaningful connections with a history they have not lived through personally. Familiar comparisons with familial postmemory are her idea of prosthetic memory, both of which involve mediated experiences of an unknown past, and they call attention to different ways of accessing it. This difference is important in the event of family testimony being rendered documentary. The present research can ask how the relationship of the Dadi to Maha is similar and dissimilar with the relationship of a later viewer to Maha. Kinship, direct viewing and mediated viewing can all result in involvement, and each form of involvement results in the acquisition of knowledge and responsibility in different ways.

Camera images, public commemoration, and the ways some histories are remembered and others forgotten constitute some of the mechanisms that Marita Sturken (1997) outlines for exploring cultural memory. Her talk also queries “How can narratives of healing bridge politics?”. This attitude relates to the presentation of Dadi’s testimony in a film because a documentary inevitably is a selection and presentation of testimony. It draws the present study into thinking about which elements are featured, which might be omitted and even whether a “redemption story” supersedes the ongoing conflict. Sturken’s

historical study is not related to Partition, but does offer questions concerning the politics and constraints of mediated remembrance.

As a collective, these works demonstrate that familial remembrance can only be explored from its social, certain, historical context and ways of being visualized. The frameworks and practices of memory are called to the fore by Halbwachs and the Assmanns, mediation by Erll and Sturken, testimony and reception by Felman and Laub, Portelli and LaCapra. Through the specificity of scholarship, Partition perhaps can help avoid reducing these ideas into abstract concepts that are disconnected from the lives of those displaced, gender differences, citizenship, and borders. These approaches are complimentary, and should not be merged into a single “theory”.

The present study brings this scholarship into a focused examination of *The Partition Project*. Its contribution is to connect identity formation with the ethical negotiation of inherited testimony within the grandmother–granddaughter relationship. It asks how Maha’s engagement with Dadi’s history changes her understanding of belonging and how documentary representation affects the conditions under which that history is shared. This is a defined analytical contribution rather than a claim that no previous scholarship exists on the novel. Establishing a comprehensive publication gap would require a separate, systematic search of studies specifically addressing Faruqi’s text.

2.1. Research Gap

The literature of trauma, Partition and cultural memory offers many insights into historical trauma, displacement, testimony and intergenerational remembrance. These larger treatments, however, suggest there will be a particular question to explore in this context about the ways in which familial memory creates the identity of its descendant, emotionally and ethically. The present study focuses on this interface between these two worlds by exploring the grandmother–granddaughter relationship as a conduit through which memories of the Partition are transmitted, understood, and conveyed. It’s no one just seeking to preserve traditional experience per se, but on the fraught questions of who can record it, how can it be made available to others, whose authority regulates its circulation. Combining Cathy Caruth’s account of traumatic representation and Ruth Leys’s trauma theory, along with the notion of postmemory, developed by Marianne Hirsch, allows the study to differentiate the directly experienced from the mediated, in this instance, the mediated relationship to trauma. This separation is crucial in examining the role of inherited remembrance in issues of identity and belonging while also critically reflecting on the ways in which each group may be subject to a different form of trauma than the others. In the context of *The Partition Project*, therefore, the research explores a specific schism within analysis, that of the linkage between familial trauma, intergenerational memory, documentary mediation and identity. It explores both its social and psychosocial interpretation of remembrance, as a gift from parents and an ethical duty,

and the potential for making a connection through its storytelling, but also for creating conflict over trust, consent and possession.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and literary-analytical research design to examine familial trauma, intergenerational memory, and identity in Saadia Faruqi's *The Partition Project* (2024). Qualitative inquiry aides in the exploration of meanings in their social and cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design allows for a close analysis of the ways in which the past multiple generations of families of migration, and in the case of Dadi, recall of the Partition, impact identity and belonging for Maha.

The interpretative will examine the relationship of language, the form, characterization, and context in creating the meaning of literature. Close reading is the main way to discuss dialogue, the narrative voice, imagery, time changes, and emotion, using evidenced from the text to support the interpretation (Barry, 2009). This reading of remembrance, mediation, and familial transmission, is informed by Caruth's (1996) account of traumatic representation, a critical examination of trauma theory by Leys (2000), and Hirsch's (2008, 2012) concept of postmemory.

The design is limited to the novel's literary portrayal of experience and identity. Its conclusion offers interpretations which are specific to that text, but do not make clinical judgments or general statements about the experiences of Partition survivors and their children.

3.2. Research Methods

This study is a combination of close reading and thematic analysis. The complete novel constitutes the primary textual corpus, while relevant theoretical and historical scholarship supplies secondary material. Passages are chosen intentionally to be relevant to the two research questions. These encompass Dadi's memories of displacement, Maha's reactions to the history of her family, Dadi and Maha's interaction, documenting and contemplating on identity and belonging. Strategic bits of text are explained either in the context of adjoining scenes or of the larger story.

Close reading is a practice that considers the language and form of the novel to create meaning. Emphasis is placed on the difference there is between what the character experiences, what other characters think they have experienced, and what the narrator reports. When considering the emotional restraint or lack thereof, the misunderstanding, or a seemingly generational gap, it's important to make this distinction. It also examines the interplay between the past and the present, recalling the discourse on movement between the remembered and the current, and the contemporary relationship to family life.

Thematic analysis can offer a systematic and organized approach to identifying and deriving patterns that connect to the research questions of interest. The process of

familiarization, initial coding, theme development, review, definition and interpretation is informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) account. Rather than focusing on the literal level of language, these procedures are applicable to a literary text and support and focus on its literary context and form. Themes are created as a pattern of interpretation and are not just repetitions of words or topics.

First encoding emphasizes documented displacement, communication with family members, generational gap, identity negotiation, trust and consent. Descriptions can be of a starting point only and are open for revision throughout the process of reading. Themes are developed in comparative analysis to other sections that are relevant, such as the role of tradition in shaping identity; the role of the recipient of testimony; conflicts between claims to personal memory and history.

The first research question will be explored by examining the effects of Dadi's past on Maha's sense of self and sense of family. That second is tackled in passages on the art of storytelling, and written and untethered narration. The reading of each feature relates to a specific textual detail or point and to the related theory, and the difference between direct and mediated engagement of the text in both recollection and interpretation is maintained.

Partition scholarship provides historical background for the references to displacement, and borders and belonging. But the 'contextual' information is not applied to make a fictional character in the novel responsible for experiences that it does not, in itself, provide. Likewise, the analysis considers passages that complicate its proposed argument, including moments of continuity, ordinary disagreement, or incomplete understanding.

4. Theoretical Framework

The study employs a psychosocial framework grounded principally in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) and Ruth Leys's *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000). In this context "psychosocial" denotes the bonds between personal experience, familial relations, and the historical context in which pain enters into meaning. It allows for the blending of remembered experience and relationships and belonging, yet keeps a focus on literary representation.

The difficulties in understanding and representing of traumatic experience are discussed by Caruth (1996). Focusing on the articulation of an event and its limits, with a view to the relationship between the two, her work draws attention to the interplay that lies between the knowledge and its limits. In this context, this approach resonates with a set of questions raised in the present study regarding the way that the remembered past becomes accessible through narration and on the part of Maha, what happens when an experience is manifestly beyond her knowledge. It does not make any a priori judgments about the novel being fragmented or all recollection is traumatic.

Leys (2000) offers a critical analysis of the development and contradictory premises of trauma theory. Her artwork critiques the idea of trauma as a uniform condition, with uniform forms of memory and trauma expression. Therefore, in the study, Caruth and Leys are considered not as the one, unified theory but as a dialogic continuation of each other. Leys's write-up helps to avoid mistaking textual evidence for psychological inference especially when it comes to understanding silence, emotional distance, or otherwise;

The accompanying idea for the discussion of intergenerational transmission is that of postmemory that is offered by Hirsch. Hirsch (2008, 2012) differentiates between direct memory and the strong affinity that later generations can have to the earlier experiences through narrative, imagery, behaviour and imagination. This separation allows the study to explore an interaction with Dadi's past without calling the granddaughter an "eyewitness" or presume she suffers, as does Dadi. Postmemory is used to investigate the conditions and consequences of mediated remembrance.

The framework also covers the duties of another person's experience. When thinking about creative engagement with inherited histories, as Hirsch (2012) discusses, there are some questions of empathy and appropriation to consider. The questions which follow the novel are related to the move from the 'Family Story' to the 'Documentary Representation'. The analysis focuses on the relationship of preservation and the survivor's authority, on trust and on recording, and how the latter can allow for the public circulation of the family history, but not without authorizing it.

The Partition Project is based on these voices, and together, they allow a specific study of familial trauma, inter-generational memory and identity. The physicist Caruth presents an investigation of traumatic representation, the critic and theorist Leys offers critical evaluation of the explanatory principles for traumatic representation, and Hirsch illuminates the mediated relationship between the descendant and the ancestral experience. Their application remains responsive to the novel's language and narrative development, allowing the study to investigate remembrance as both a source of connection and a relationship requiring interpretation and responsibility.

4.1. Data Analysis

The familial trauma and intergenerational memory and identity in *The Partition Project* of Saadia Faruqi is analyzed in this section, taking a close look at selected textual passages. It examines how Partition impacts Dadi's relationship with Maha as well as her granddaughter's historical and belonging identity. This analysis relies on Caruth's (1996) account of traumatic experience, Leys's (2000) critical look on trauma theory and Hirsch's (2008, 2012) postmemory: a concept that separates the lived memory of the survivor from the mediated memory of the descendant. The emphasis is on storytelling and documentary recording as means of passing, interpreting and sustaining memory. Thematic organization

and subsequent exploration of emotional boundaries and ethical issues associated with representing the experiences of another, along with the identification, discussion and interrogation of the work's textual evidence and how it relates to the theoretical framework, to explore how familial memory can transmit to inter-generational identities.

4.2. Familial Testimony and the Recognition of Trauma

Dadi's memories bring Maha to a history beyond all past references. The difference between story and lived experience becomes salient in the conversations, influencing who gives the testimony to the granddaughter. In the novel, the researcher explores the importance of listening to a survivor's emotions in the telling of her words beyond merely using it as content for a project. This is the next quote in the book that sets what the researcher think is Dadi's authority on naming what Dadi's experience is.

"They're not stories, you silly girl. They're real life. They're—how do you say?—our trauma." (Faruqi, 2024, p. 144)

Dadi's edit calls into question that sense of separation that exists between a story and a living tragedy. This phrase, "real life", helps to stress that these are real-life experiences which are not fictionalized into a story for an imaginary listener. The person behind the account needs to be recognized, the statement asks Maha. While storytelling can orchestrate the past into a concept that can be absorbed by the reader or listener, it can also inspire the reader or listener to treat painful memories as a slice of life, unfolding as a series of interesting questions. Dadi negates this when she states the experiential importance of that which she remembers.

There's the change from stories to our trauma, personal history to broader tales of sorrow. The possessive 'our' contextualises Dadi's experience within a collective one but doesn't detain the reader to the extent of stating that each survivor experienced Partition in a manner identical that. Her testimony is her own, but the particularities of its existence are more historical than personal. "how do you say" typology highlights the challenge to use an appropriate word. It shows the attempt to cross generations and languages but not that it is incomprehensible.

Specifically with an overwhelming that seems too much, Caruth's account (1996) has some focal points to attend to the challenges involved in narrating overwhelming experience. But Leys' (2000) critical perspective reminds us to be aware of the use of the term – trauma. In this passage it is clear that Dadi remembers the experience as traumatic in itself and so the interpretation starts from her own description. Familial transmission emerges as a process requiring recognition and careful listening. Maha's understanding is gained through contact with someone else's account whose meaning she cannot grasp without coming into contact with the speaker.

4.3. Privacy and the Boundaries of Familial Remembrance

Passing down family history is not just about the interest of a descendant. It also relies on the survivor being the one who is saying that things that might be very private might be very public. *The Partition Project* defines access to memory as part of the relation between grandmothers & grandchildren, in which loving doesn't always become unconditional access to memory. In the following excerpts, the dual concerns of historical preservation and the privacy of the person with memory are highlighted.

“But... but that's personal. Private.” (Faruqi, 2024, p. 145)

The use of “but” multiple times shows hesitation and resistance in the exchange. It draws the line around the proposed disclosure with the words “personal” and “private.” They are saying that history does not negate the speaker's right to the speaker's own history. A memory may feel difficult or unwanted because it is about something that happens in the public sphere. A memory can be about a big public event and be unpleasant or hard to remember. The passage thus undermines any claim that “the singularity of history preservation” is to ensure that all recollections are preserved.

The boundary is particularly noticeable in a family relationship where emotional intimacy can lead to a sense of obligation for sharing. A younger family member might think it's a demonstration of caring to ask about the past, and the older family member might feel the same way about it as an intrusion. In this novel, these are all allowed to coexist. The passage offers no proof that silence is necessarily due to trauma – it can also convey a preference for privacy or uncertainty around how an experience is being shared, or a desire for control. The importance of this is that with its help, you can make that control easily visible.

Hirsch's discussion on postmemory offers support to an approach that differentiates between a descendant's investment on an inherited history and ownership of lived history on the part of the survivor. Maha's experience of Partition is mediated and can't “wipe out” their difference between hearing about Partition and actually experiencing it. The liturgical passage voluntarily places limits on intergenerational remembrance, therefore. To explore the family history, there is a need for consideration of what has been expressed and read, and what has not been expressed and read.

4.4. Documentary Preservation and the Value of Inherited Memory

Maha highlights the importance of family history and testimony as a way to maintain a grasp on a history otherwise difficult to come by in her documentary work. Recording will help to hold onto memories of the conversation and provide access to it for future listeners. But the World Heritage language also poses questions on the nature of “personal history” as “historical documentation”. This is an excerpt from a text that is a statement of Maha's appreciation and sensitivity towards the memory of the generation that came before.

“The stories of Dadi’s generation are more than just memories. They’re also historical data. Heritage. More precious than jewels because they will one day be lost forever if we don’t save them.” (Faruqi, 2024, p. 145)

The passage progresses through a succession of descriptions: “memories”, “historical data” and “heritage”, which broaden the scope of the accounts. The term “Memories” implies they are a reflection of memory and “historical data” implies that they are useful sources of knowledge. With “Heritage”, she brings in a bond between these stories and something that is shared. Maha starts to realize that what she says in a family account might add to another history, beyond the family. Her interest then turns to the kind of connection between intimacies and public memory.

The expressions of the value of this inheritance is compared to “jewels.” The recall of something that is not something that can be stored; it may be unattainable when the owner or speaker of the memory is not able or willing to share its memory. “Lost forever” is urgent and makes it seem like there is some obligation to record. But that sense of urgency should be called into question. An agenda to preserve memories can inspire a descendant to put more weight on preservation than upon the immediate needs of the remembered individual.

Hirsch’s (2008) notion of postmemory aids in understanding how Maha is investing in a past she was unable to be a part of. Her connection with Partition is developed via other generations’ narratives and the representational practice of documenting them. Documentary work makes it possible to generate this inherited connection not to recover the organic events taken for granted. Preservation thus promises and problems: recording can live up to the expectations of retaining historical knowledge but that depends on how the status and welfare of the speaker are acknowledged.

4.5. Emotional Boundaries and the Limits of Recording

Documentary process also reveals the possibilities for reducing the remembering of remembrance to an unproblematic good. Going back to sad experiences can put pressure on the survivor and/or the family member(s) might interrupt the activity. In the novel, the issue of comprehending the situation of Dadi is a counterbalance to Maha’s wish to keep on gathering testimonies. Emotional conditions of recording are intrinsic to the family’s response and are listed in the following passage.

“No more recording, no more interviews. It’s too much for your grandmother!” (Faruqi, 2024, p. 177)

There’s a clear interruption because there’s a line that’s repeated, “no more.” Recording and interviewing is kept separate, thereby highlighting the focus on the technological aspects as well as on the conversation itself. The phrase “It’s too much” is a point of perceived constraint that Dadi can carry at this time. But her memory is not

unworthy of being used—the fact that her welfare is placed above the project does not imply that it is not valuable.

This intervention marks the intermingling relationship of Documentary encounter and Family. Maha must deal with an Ancestral Human who has needs that are larger than the usefulness of her testimony. The other family members are also involved in decision making about what care involves. The scene thus reveals conflicting priorities: the historical value to be preserved, the granddaughter's dedication to history, and the grandmother's concern for the emotional toll. These priorities are interconnected, but do not necessarily bring about the same decision.

The passage illustrates the dangers of assuming that speaking leads to healing and recovery, through a literary reading, wherein the process of recovery and healing is presented in a trauma-informed manner. Leys' (2000) critique and Caruth's (1996) work bring critical attention to the challenges involved in traumatic narration, and consequently discards any generalizations about the meaning or effects. The text supports the specific conclusion that this family perceives the process as exceeding Dadi's present limits. Intergenerational remembrance consequently requires responsiveness to refusal, fatigue, and changing circumstances, rather than an expectation of continuous disclosure.

4.6. Intergenerational Memory and Diasporic Belonging

Maha's experience of Partition has a parallel effect on her sense of cultural and national belonging. Her ancestral South Asian history meets with her American identity; the two converge. She is interested in Dadi's experiences because she does not think that distance or nationality should necessarily engender history's indifference. The following passage speaks of a stance where membership to America, sympathy for Partition is not incompatible.

“Well, I'm American, but I care.” (Faruqi, 2024, p. 143)

The belief in Maha's American identity and the history's legitimacy are affirmed. The but is answering an observation that one would expect that Partition may not be of interest to her, but rather to herself as an American. Instead, her pronouncement goes against what is expected, but doesn't negate her current connection. These beliefs of belonging are those of holding a place to accommodate an association with another place and another generation.

I care is also an expression of historical engagement as an affair. Being a descendant of Partition does NOT automatically mean that Maha is a part of it; it's through paying attention to Dadi and willing to listen that Maha becomes a part of it. This distinction is important because it does not make identity into an expression of inherited suffering. The concern of the granddaughter can affect his sense of himself, and others experiences and attachments can coexist. Family history is the context that makes her connection to change available, but her relationship is relational and voluntary.

In Hirsch's (2012) account of postmemory, this mediated path between a descendant and an earlier generation's experience is brought to light. Maha isn't wracked with the memories herself, but they could have become her own within her current life. In this way, the social structures of memory come into focus, and this is strengthened by Halbwachs' (1992) focus on the social frames in which memory is formed and can take shape. The article introduces the concept of diasporic identity as a process of negotiation between the existing affiliations, the received memory, and the commitments established with another through personal relationships.

4.7. From Documentary Achievement to Relational Responsibility

Since Maha's engagement is promoting, the documentary work opens the opportunity to rethink the concept of a successful representation. First, it is most visible when the audience's attention is gained, but when in the company of those involved in these histories, new priorities are offered. This novel is focused on caring for others whom it depicts/figures as well as on their wish to be saved and shared. The subsequent text is more focussed on consideration of the project in relation to relationships and not on its public reception.

"I suddenly don't care how many views my video got. All I care about are the people at this little senior center." (Faruqi, 2024, p. 238)

The difference between views and people alters the criteria for evaluating the work done by Maha. Views represent circulation, but give little insight into experiences or responses of those represented. Her comment brings a focus to the people who make analog's story significant. It's a moment of recognition, indicated with the word 'suddenly' - when the value of the project becomes more audible with than through numbers of visitors.

This shift also impacts the relationship of the director to the film's subjects. Persons no longer show up foremost as fascinating historical artifacts, but as persons to whom Maha feels responsible. This stewardship has to do with how their accounts are noted, explained and shared. The passage is not rejecting the preservation of documents. It demonstrates Maha's growing sense of responsibility for ways of preserving that are grounded in the relationships upon which they depend.

It is during this moment that identity formation and the ethics of remembrance is linked to the aims of the study. Through his work with family history, Maha comes to understand the differences in his role as a listener and documentarian. Intergenerational memory is not just about learning about Partition it is also an emerging feeling of cares and accountability. The novel, then, is a form of document fiction in which a descendant can find a way to gain greater understanding of and appreciation for the members of a family who have created history.

5. Conclusion

This study examines how familial trauma and intergenerational memory shape identity and belonging in Saadia Faruqi's *The Partition Project*. The analysis indicates that Partition continues to matter in the relationships of which the experiences are remembered and communicated via. Transmissions from Dadi's testimony bring Maha into a past she never lived that makes her ponder illusion and connection to past and current. After various quotations from Caruth, Leys, and Hirsch, the study argues that historical inheritance is more than a mere transmission of the same experience; it's an interpretation.

With reference to the first research question, the disintegrating notion of family culture is explored in engaging with memory, enhancing Maha's sense of identity. She claims to be American and yet to be concerned by Partition - contesting the notion of nation to dictate historical focus. Her tie to Dadi's history helps her become a fractious, American American and to stay connected with South Asian history. Intergenerational remembrance is thus a tool that she uses to negotiate with her belongingness and to acknowledge her own lives as histories and lives beyond her.

On the second research question, the role of storytelling and documentary representation comes into play as an important, but disputed, way of passing down memory. It is important that the family wishes to share Dadi's testimony—historical value of family memories—but controversy over privacy and recording brings to light the responsibilities involved in family preservation. Dadi's insistence on the personal aspect of her memories is a show to her readers that kinship doesn't inevitably grant permission to circulate its memory. The historical recognition in the documentary thus has to be negotiated together with consent, trust and the authority of the survivor.

The analysis also implies that there is no sure-fire remedy for emotional recovery from remembrance. Maha's confusion of response by audience keeps open the potential of other viewers being influenced by the documentary differently. Her sympathy for participants is more than her blindness to numbers, showing a trend towards ethical consciousness. Historical narratives are important because there is a recognition that they are a statement from people who are active, whose welfare is pertinent to the value of their story.

By offering an in-depth psychosocial analysis of the remembrance of the family as something inherited and a duty, the study amply contributes to the interpretation of remembrance. *The Partition Project* explores identities as they are being formed through a process of engaging with the past through the lens of ancestral experience, and highlights the tensions of representing the experience. Its depiction of the grandmother–granddaughter relationship emphasizes that meaningful connection with the past requires attentive listening, respect for personal boundaries, and acknowledgment of the differences between witnessing suffering and learning about it.

References

- Assmann, A. (2011). *Cultural memory and Western civilization: Functions, media, archives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barry, P. (2009). *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory* (3rd ed.). Manchester University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Butalia, U. (2000). *The other side of silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Duke University Press.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Das, V. (2007). *Life and words: Violence and the descent into the ordinary*. University of California Press.
- Erll, A. (2011). *Memory in culture* (S. B. Young, Trans.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Faruqi, S. (2024). *The Partition Project*. Quill Tree Books.
- Felman, S., & Laub, D. (1992). *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history*. Routledge.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Hirsch, M. (2008). The generation of postmemory. *Poetics Today*, 29(1), 103–128.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>
- Hirsch, M. (2012). *The generation of postmemory: Writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press.
- LaCapra, D. (2001). *Writing history, writing trauma*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Landsberg, A. (2004). *Prosthetic memory: The transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture*. Columbia University Press.
- Leys, R. (2000). *Trauma: A genealogy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Menon, R., & Bhasin, K. (1998). *Borders & boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. Kali for Women.
- Pandey, G. (2001). *Remembering Partition: Violence, nationalism and history in India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Portelli, A. (1991). *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: Form and meaning in oral history*. State University of New York Press.
- Rothberg, M. (2009). *Multidirectional memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization*. Stanford University Press.

Sturken, M. (1997). *Tangled memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the politics of remembering*. University of California Press.

Zakaria, A. (2015). *The footprints of Partition: Narratives of four generations of Pakistanis and Indians*. HarperCollins Publishers India.

Zamindar, V. F.-Y. (2007). *The long Partition and the making of modern South Asia: Refugees, boundaries, histories*. Columbia University Press.