MAKING SENSE OF CITIZENSHIP AND CITIZEN IDENTITY IN LIGHT OF THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT (CAA) 2019: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MICRO-LEVEL CITIZENSHIP PROCESSES AMONG INDIAN CITIZENS

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Abstract: Citizenship literature often either concentrates on the macro-level aspects of citizenship or investigates the micro-level processes. This project bridges micro-level processes with the macro-level components of citizenship using Structural Symbolic Interactionism. Citizenship is more than just a formal membership bestowed upon us by the nation-state; it is also a claims-making process where individuals extend citizenship claims based on ethnic, racial, or other social identities. Using thirty semi-structured interviews with Indian citizens, this qualitative study of citizenship shows how the micro-level process of citizenship—i.e., making sense of citizenship, is guided by macro-level dimensions or layers of citizenship. Overall, this study makes a threefold contribution. First, it offers a blueprint for a holistic investigation of citizenship. Not only does it investigate how individuals make sense of citizenship and citizen identity, draw symbolic boundaries, and differentiate between citizens and non-citizens, but it shows how larger structures guide such processes. Second, it sheds light on the multi-dimensionality of citizenship. I argue that citizenship includes multiple layers, and each of its layers must be perceived as an arena where citizenship interacts with another structure. Not only are these layers dynamic, but they shape the symbolic boundaries of citizenship. Last, I argue that the micro-level claims-making process depends on these layers as the structural interactions activate specific definitions and restrict others. Thus, whether someone can deploy a symbol or definition to claim citizenship depends on structural interactions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 8

Theoretical Background: Defining Citizenship 8
Citizenship Process 11
Citizen Identity 13

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 18

Identity Theory 18
Identity Work 21
Structural Symbolic Interactionism 27

IV. BACKGROUND 30

Citizenship Amendment Act 30

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 33

Overview 33
Qualitative Research Design 33
Stimulus Texts 34
Recruitment Process, COVID-19, and Online Interviews 38
Conducting Online Interviews 42
Ethical Rigor 45
Risks and Risk Perception 46
Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis 48
Codes 51
Oral History 51

Chapter Page

VI. FINDINGS.....56

This Law is Based on Historical Event: Pro-CAA Narrative 56
Fracturing the Nation: Anti-CAA Narrative 73

VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....90

The Structural Side.....90
Micro-level Processes of Citizenship.....96
Limitations and Future Directions 101

REFERENCES 104

APPENDICES 130

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Narrators 42

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Lately, citizenship has been at the center of debates in India. India's already complicated relationship with secularism became even more convoluted with the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2019. The Act's promotion of preferential treatment towards specific religious communities in regard to the ability to claim Indian citizenship incited countrywide debate, protests, and riots in 2019 and 2020. I argue that the CAA brought a structural shift in Indian citizenship and created a space to reevaluate the association of religion and citizenship. It compelled Indian citizens to rethink intersecting identities and allowed them to redefine citizenship and citizen identity. This project uses a structural symbolic interactionist lens to document how Indian citizens make sense of the CAA, citizenship, and citizen identity.

The constitution of India emphasizes the equality of religions and separation between the state and religion. The 1.4 billion people of India have the right to enjoy equal opportunity regarding religious beliefs, rites, and rituals. India conducted its last

Census in 2011. The most recent census, which was supposed to happen in 2021, was postponed due to Covid-19. Nonetheless, the 2011 census informs us that almost 80% of the population follows Hinduism, 14% follows Islam, and the remaining 6% follows Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and other religions (Census 2011). Citizens enjoy national holidays during Holi, Diwali, and Dussehra[1], Eid-ul-Fitr and Muharram[2], Buddha-Purnima[3], Nanak and Mahavir Jayanti[4], as well as Christmas and Good Friday.

Nevertheless, India has a complicated relationship with secularism. Despite upholding secular values, India's laws abide by traditional religious codes (Herrenschmidt 2009). The country does not have a Uniform Civil Code[5]. When settling matters related to family, marriage, divorce, adoption, or inheritance, the court looks into the "personal laws" of respective religious communities (Arya 2006; Subramanian 2014). For instance, matters related to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Lingayats, and Sikhs are settled with the Hindu Code Bill (Banningan 1952). Similarly, we have Muslim Personal Laws, Christian Personal Laws, and Parsi Personal Laws to settle matters of respective communities.

Socio-politically, religious and caste identity have always played an important role. Varnashrama[6], the ancient root of the modern caste system, is argued to be used to organize society politically (Hocart 1970 as cited in König 2016. Pg. 113). The caste system initially

[1] Some of the biggest festivals of the Hindus.
[2] Eid-ul-Fitr marks the last day of Ramzan or Ramadan month when Muslims break their month-long fasting, whereas Muharram celebrates the Islamic New Year.
[3] Buddhist festival celebrating the day of the birth of Tanmay Gautama.
[4] Festivals celebrating birth anniversaries of Guru Nanak— the tenth Guru of Sikhism and Mahavir Jain— the last Tirthankar of Jainism.
[5] A Uniform Civil Code refers to laws that could replace religious personal laws and apply to all citizens irrespective of their religious beliefs.
[6] We find mentions of Varnashrama in one of the earliest texts related to citizens and citizenship in India— Arthashastra (Prasad 1978; Hocart 1970). Arthashastra was written by Kautilya (also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta), a Brahmin political figure and advisor of the emperor Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya empire in the third century BC. The book mentions Varnashrama dharma - where citizens are divided into four Varnas (later known as castes). We also find mentions of Varnashrama in Manusmriti, an older Vedic scripture.

provided one's religious and political identities. The system, “besides forming the structural basis of the Brahmanic[7] religion, got itself ingrained into the social, political, and cultural systems" (Souza 1991:1334).

In contemporary India, Indian citizenship is ‘layered’ rather than dichotomous (citizen vs. non-citizens) (Mitra 2010: 47). In post-colonial India, legal and moral categories of citizenship exist. While the state bestows legal citizenship, moral citizenship is established when individuals claim moral rights to belong to a state (ibid.). Thus, Mitra (2010) argues that there is a normative ground for citizenship claims and rejections[8]. In the normative ground, individuals can be categorized as un-citizens despite holding legal citizenship because of their alleged loyalty to another nation or political inactivity. He also argues that India’s citizenship discourse has gradually leaned towards an exclusive and ethnic basis rather than inclusive and secular premises (Mitra 2008).

Citizenship and citizen identity do not exist in a void; instead, they intersect with other social identities. The distribution of citizenship resources and rights often depends on citizen identity and sexual, gender, caste, or racial identity. Banning same-sex relationships and marriage and preventing women from acquiring properties and voting exemplify how citizen identity works alongside other identities. Lately, with the rise of Hindu nationalism, religious identity has been prioritized. Although the leaders in post-Independence India tried to separate the spheres of citizenship and religion by enacting a secular constitution, they were unsuccessful. Failure to implement a Uniform Civil Code exemplifies this.

[7] In ancient India, the dominant religion was Vedic, and the Brahmins, as priests and the holders of the top stratum in the caste hierarchy, ruled the matters related to religion. Hinduism emerged in a more recent era (see DeVotta 2010).

[8] Mitra’s argument is not a novel one. Favell (1999), Yuval-Davis (2006, 2007), discuss citizenship and the politics of belonging. We find the concept of layered citizenship in Yuval-Davis’s (1999) work as well.

Under the current government's rule, India is witnessing an active attempt to integrate religion into politics. Bharatiya Janata Party[9] (BJP) and other Hindu nationalist organizations' attacks on the cultural and social rights of religious minority groups reveal that although the constitution emphasizes the notion of secularism and equality, citizenship rights are not equally distributed (Bhargava 2002; Sarkar and Sarkar 2016). For example, soon after winning the election for Prime Minister in 2014, the Narendra Modi government (BJP) declared a ban on beef consumption. Implementing this ban encouraged the rise of cow vigilante groups who, in several cases, lynched Muslim men[10] based on rumors of carrying cows to slaughterhouses or eating beef (Sarkar and Sarkar 2016). This ban also affected specific sub-groups of Muslim communities and Dalits[11] involved with the beef trade (Sarkar and Sarkar 2016). The controversial anti-Love Jihad campaign[12] is another example of open attacks on Muslims where Muslim men are portrayed as threats against the Hindu nation and women. Activists connected to this campaign not only spread rumors and fear about Muslim men but actively participate in "rescuing" Hindu women by publicly assaulting their partners, bringing false rape charges, and forcefully marrying the women off to Hindu men (Strohl 2019). The Supreme court verdict given on the Ram Mandir case is also viewed as a triumph

[9] Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP is known as the political wing of Hindu nationalist (or Hindutva) organizations. Currently, BJP is ruling the nation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
[10] Counter-Currents is an organization that spreads awareness regarding crises related to climate change, Peak oil, war, and other issues. Its website includes a list of all beef-ban-related lynching in India. https://countercurrents.org/tag/beef-ban-lynching/. In several cases, police were found to act as cow vigilantes. See also: Kashyap, Sunil. September 8, 2020. UP police accused of another brutal assault on a Muslim man on suspicion of cow slaughter. *The Caravan*, Retrieved on September 8, 2020. https://caravanmagazine.in/news/up-police-accused-of-another-assault-on-muslim-man-on-suspicion-of-cow-slaughter
[11] The four-tiered caste system excluded some people. Historically, these people have been referred to as 'untouchables' (a pejorative term). Later, they chose the term 'Dalit' to refer to themselves. The term is synonymous to downtrodden or oppressed.
[12] According to the Hindutva groups, 'Love Jihad' is a conspiracy against the Hindus. Under the Love Jihad campaign, Muslim men are appointed to lure young Hindu women with false promises of love and convert them into Islam.

of the Hindutva movement. In 2019, the Supreme court of India unanimously declared that the disputed land of Ayodhya[13] (where the Babri mosque once stood before being demolished by the Karsevaks or volunteers of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) be given for the building of Ram Mandir (a temple of Lord Ram).

The CAA 2019 was referred to by many as yet another nail to the secular promise made by the constitution. In December 2019, the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act created a turbulent situation in India. Even before the Citizenship Amendment Bill was turned into an Act, many Indians believed it to be contentious as it explicitly discriminates among people based on their religious backgrounds in claiming Indian citizenship. Many feared that the Bill was a step to create tiers of citizens based on their religious beliefs. The Bill initiated a heated debate regarding citizenship. Since the passing of the CAA, protests, clashes, and riots marked this time as a critical period in India's history. Hence, I decided to carefully capture and store the influence of the CAA on citizenship discourse and citizen identity for the future.

As an Oral History project, this study documents how people make sense of citizenship and their citizen identity concerning the CAA and their lived experiences. The goal of oral history projects is not just to record a historical phenomenon but to document the accounts of people who have been historically overlooked and silenced (Ritchie 2014). Oral historians do not necessarily occupy themselves with distant history but capture people's experiences in the immediate aftermath of a phenomenon. For example, when media coverage of Hurricane Katrina was shaping the storm's collective memory, oral history

[13] In 1992, the Hindutva volunteers destroyed the Babri Masjid, a mosque built in the 16th century, claiming that the land where the mosque stood is the birthplace of the Hindu mythological God, Lord Rama. This demolition was followed by a country-wide communal riot between Hindus and Muslims.

interviews with the victims, which were conducted soon after the storm passed, provided a glimpse into how the storm shaped the lives at individual and community levels (Sloan 2008). How individuals perceive the CAA and how these perceptions impact their conceptualization of citizenship and citizen identity must be carefully recorded and stored for future reference. The data recorded during this project will be archived with the Oral History Research Program of Oklahoma State University.

The project uses a structural symbolic interactionist frame to capture how structural components guide the micro-level processes of making sense of citizenship. The structural symbolic interactionist framework allows me to investigate the structural components while I used identity theory (e.g., Burke 1991, 2003; Burke and Reitzes 1991; Burke and Stets 1999; Stets and Burke 2014; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker 1980, 2008) and theories of identity work (e.g., Hunt and Benford 1994; Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Hunt and Miller 1997) to analyze the micro-level processes of making sense of citizenship and citizen identity. I use Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (e.g., Smith 2004; Larkin et al. 2006; Noon 2017; Smith et al. 2009; Smith and Osborne 2007; Shaw 2001) to guide the analysis.

Two research questions direct this project.

1. How do Indian citizens define citizenship in the context of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)?

2. How do Indian citizens make sense of their citizen identity?

Although these questions explicitly focus on the micro-level processes of citizenship, this project is primarily interested in capturing the interactions between the structure and the self. We must remember that structure and self shape each other. Therefore, any explanation regarding self remains incomplete unless we pay attention to how structural components

guide us to make sense of the social world and us as social beings. This project indicates that it is possible to develop a theory of citizenship that is neither macro nor micro. Instead, we can create a processual theory that considers both the structural or macro-level aspects and self or micro-level elements.

In the next chapter, I discuss vital definitions and theories of citizenship. Next, I discuss citizenship as a process and citizen identity. This section is followed by a chapter on the theoretical framework, which includes identity theory, identity work, and structural symbolic interactionism. Then, I have a brief overview of the Citizenship Amendment Act. In the following sections, I provide a detailed description of the methodological design, discuss the findings, and discuss their implications. Finally, I end with a discussion of the limitations and some directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background: Defining Citizenship

T.H. Marshall's (1950) citizenship studies are still accorded as one of the earliest groundbreaking works on citizenship. Although more recent works on citizenship have expanded on and challenged his arguments, Marshall's work laid the groundwork for sociological research on citizenship. Marshall conceptualized citizenship in terms of civil rights, political rights, and social rights[14] (Marshall [1950] 2006; Barbalet 1988). Marshall perceived these rights and obligations in each sphere (civil, social, and political) as unified and interdependent (Lister 2005). Together, these rights establish "institutional conditions for equality" (Turner 2009:66) and create a more egalitarian society. With access to civil, political, and social rights, a citizen is acknowledged as a full member of

[14] By civil rights, an individual citizen enjoys the right to freedom: freedom of speech, thoughts, and faith. These rights also enable the person to access rights to own property and seek justice. With political rights, one can participate in the political processes. Social rights allow individuals to access the benefits of welfare, equal opportunities and have a secure life (Marshall [1950] 2006).

the community and is protected by the sovereign (Held 1997; Marshall [1950]2006).

Social scientists often find providing a single definition of citizenship a challenging task. Citizenship is regarded as a "contested site of social struggles" (Isin, Nyers, and Turner 2009:1). To Isin, Nyers, and Turner (2009), citizenship ensures political subjectivity. Others regard citizenship as a "momentum concept"— continuously evolving, which requires the researchers to continue to revisit and rework its definitions (Lister 2007:49.).

Citizenship theories are varied and evolving. Political theories of citizenship have evolved following historical trajectories of nation-states' three different systems: *liberal, corporatist,* and *social-democratic* (Isin and Turner 2002). Liberal theories emphasize individual rights and believe in using rights to promote self-interest without violating others' rights (Mouffe 1992; Isin and Turner 2002). On the other hand, communitarian theories emphasize communal goals, shared morals, and prioritize community over individuals (Mouffe 1992). Civic-republican theories acknowledge both individual and group rights and recognize that construction and establishment of citizenship rights often rely on contestation and struggle (Mouffe 1992; Isin and Turner 2002). Yet, scholars argue that in the post-modern period, where citizenship is continuously transforming, these theories are falling short (Isin and Turner 2002).

Researchers have been continually attempting to fill the gaps in citizenship studies. To capture the ever-growing complexity, Turner (1990) adds an active-passive component to citizenship theory and a private-public distinction. Passive citizenship refers to the process where the state attributes citizenship, whereas active citizenship

relies on participation in economic and political institutions (Turner 1990). Brubaker (2009) distinguishes between formal and substantive citizenship. His citizenship concept is constituted of "possession and exercise of political rights, by participation in the business rule, not by common rights and obligations" (Brubaker 2009:40). Yuval-Davis (1999) argues that understanding the complexities of politics, society, and people requires separation of citizenship from the notion of the nation-state. According to her, citizens carry multi-layered identity. Citizens are not only members of the nation-state but also members of local religious, ethnic, racial communities, and their relations in each of these layers affect their relations in other layers (Yuval-Davis 1999, 2007).

Scholars acknowledge that citizenship is an unequal concept. Within the category of citizen, rights and benefits are not equally distributed, thus leading to irregular citizenship, where despite having the citizenship status, the citizen loses access to rights and resources (e.g., detention or imprisonment as a suspect of terrorism) (Nyers 2011). Excluding women, people of indigenous communities, sexual minorities, and other groups that lack power and resources out of active fields of politics are ways of promoting differentiated or hierarchical citizenship (Castles 2005; Krasniqi 2015). Some argue that creating the illusion that all citizens are equal glosses over the inequalities within groups, helps the privileged maintain the status quo, and sustains inequality (Young 1989). Thus, cultural pluralists suggest that a theory of citizenship should acknowledge the social and cultural differences across groups, and minority groups should be accommodated to citizens' political community via their membership to their respective groups (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). These scholars emphasize differentiated citizenship, where citizenship status and rights are not only grounded in individual

identity but group identity, as the best way to achieve inclusion and participation in full citizenship (Young 1989; Kymlicka and Norman 1994).

Citizenship Process

As a process, citizenship is conceptualized in terms of inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms (Turner 1997; 2001). The inclusionary process involves allocating resources and rights, whereas the exclusionary process relies upon drawing boundaries by building identities (Turner 2001). Citizenship thus controls the allocation and distribution of social, economic, and cultural resources (Turner 1997). Because such resources are contingent upon citizen membership, membership allocation is restricted with exclusive practices (Turner 1997). Current debates on immigration and border wall in the USA reflects the anxieties to maintain restrictive boundaries. Introducing CAA is an exclusionary tactic grounded on identity politics. These inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms not only shape the structure, but also affect the identity work of citizens. Citizens, while engaging in identity work, try to make sense of the structural changes and evaluate their own positions in relation to these changes.

Cultural identity plays a crucial role in the citizenship process. Citizenship bestows cultural identity on its subjects (Turner 1997). Membership struggles have often been started with cultural identity claims (ibid.). A citizen not only enjoys full participation rights in social, political, and economic realms, but also in cultural realms (ethnic, religious rights) (Turner 2016; Turner 2001). In addition, since citizenship is also grounded on the membership of a political community, "citizenship identity and

citizenship cultures are national identities and national cultures" (Turner 1997:9). Turner's argument aligns with that of Anderson's (1983), who suggests that nationalism and nationality are "cultural artifacts of a particular kind" that evoke strong emotional responses from individuals (Anderson 1983:13). Here, citizenship is regarded as a cultural process that requires active participation of individuals. Cultural identities not only create boundaries to maintain membership restrictions but evoke a sense of solidarity among those who share this identity. An imagined community, rooted in collective meanings, is thus established (Anderson 1983; Turner 1997).

The citizenship process also relies on historical narratives to maintain exclusivity. Historical narratives are actively constructed and guide the process of inclusion and exclusion (Bhambra 2015). For instance, successful portrayals of Native Americans as "prehistorical remnants" and "the vanishing race" not only confined them to an earlier time but excluded them from the arena of modern-day citizenship (Bhambra 2015:109). In the 19th and early 20th century, a disability narrative was used to exclude women and Black citizens from the political arena (Baynton 2005). Women were portrayed as frail, emotionally unstable, and irrational, whereas Blacks were framed as physically and mentally weak.

The line of literature that conceptualizes citizenship as a process helps this project build its first argument. Recognizing that individuals are active agents in defining citizenship and citizenship relies on communal meanings, I argue that introducing the CAA transformed how Indian citizens understood citizenship. Individuals will need to

adjust their previous understanding of citizenship in light of this new amendment. The process will also require them to draw on cultural and historical narratives.

Citizen Identity

I argue that the way individuals make sense of citizenship varies as their citizen identity interacts with their other social identities. Sexual, racial, ethnic, religious, and other particularistic social identities often intersect with citizenship identity (Mouffe 1992a; Purvis and Hunt 1999; Soysal 2000). In the post-modern world, the transformation in citizenship discourse is driven by the rise of identity politics (Purvis and Hunt 1999). According to the universalistic conceptualization of citizenship, people who enjoy citizenship status share equal duties, responsibilities, and rights, and are equally treated by the law irrespective of their other social identities (Purvis and Hunt 1999). Such universalism has been referred to as a paradox (Joppke 2008). The tension emerged "from the actuality of a plurality of social identities and the singular identity implied by citizenship" (Purvis and Hunt 1999: 458). The universalistic citizenship concept that implies the equality of status of all citizens failed to consider particularity, differences, and inequality (ibid.). Thus, there has been an increasing propensity to push for demands connected with particularistic identities (Soysal 2000). A particularistic conceptualization of citizenship thus realizes that to achieve equality, it is necessary to acknowledge unique identity positions and particular claims of citizens (Soysal 2000; Purvis and Hunt 1999). By introducing CAA, India's citizenship law now prioritizes religious identity. India's citizenship boundary is being redrawn based on religious affiliations. Simultaneously, the inclusion and exclusion mechanisms will be transformed.

Thus, based on respective identity positions, citizens will make sense of Indian citizenship in varied ways.

There are wide variations within the universalistic ideology. Universalism, in the case of citizenship, includes a paradox. Despite propounding unitary ideologies, it maintains selective processes (Halfmann 1998). Political inclusiveness does not necessarily mean inclusivity in other social spheres (ibid.). The paradox also emerges from the fact that citizenship "operates simultaneously as a force for inclusion and exclusion both within and at the borders of nation-states" (Lister 1998: 71). Joppke (2008) identifies immigrant integration techniques of certain European nations, such as the head-scarf ban in France as examples of particular universalism. According to Mouritsen (2006), Denmark's citizenship laws also follow a particular universalism. The particularistic aspect becomes apparent when it comes to treatment of Muslim immigrants.

India, in post-independence period, relied on a universalist approach as well. The Nehruvian[15] citizenship ideologies in post-independence India prioritized a "national-civic" form of universal citizenship (Jayal 2011). However, by not implementing a uniform civil code, the government promoted multiculturalism and legal pluralism (Agnes 2007). Thus, India is caught between an ongoing tension of balancing legal universalism and legal pluralism (Rudolph and Rudolph 2000). Legal universalism emphasizes a homogenous group of citizens with uniform rights and responsibilities, whereas legal pluralism acknowledges heterogeneity grounded in group identities

[15] Jawaharlal Nehru was the first prime minister of India after independence in 1947.

(Rudolph and Rudolph 2000). Interestingly, some researchers argue that the Hindu nationalist ideology,[16] which aims to establish India as a Hindu nation, must be conceptualized as a "distinctive" and "exclusionary" form of universalism, one which aims to achieve uniformity based on religious group identity (Jayal 2011:189).

My other argument stands on the link between citizenship and identity. The CAA stirred up the debates regarding citizenship and identity in India. The dialogues surrounding the CAA allow people to revisit the old citizenship narratives and rebuild new ones. I argue that these citizenship narratives will reflect the identity politics initiated by the CAA and require people to negotiate their citizen identity. A transformation of self will occur due to changes in structure.

Citizen identity has been identified as the "key psychological building block," the "social glue" that helps instilling a sense of solidarity among members and promotes social cohesion (Conover 1995:133). Citizen identity is a group identity that relies on shared values. Therefore, it holds the community together by promoting solidarity (Conover 1995). Conover (1995), while attempting to provide a conceptual framework of citizenship and self, delineates three basic citizenship elements—*political membership*, *sense of citizenship*, and *practice*. She argues that it is the *sense of citizenship* that leads to citizen identity. However, Conover (1995) specifies that formation of citizen identity requires membership of a political community as well as an "understanding" related to the "framework of beliefs" that one develops about roles,

[16] Hindu nationalist movement believes that India rightfully belongs to Hindus. Hindu nationalist organizations such as Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Viswa Hindu Parishad aim to establish India as a Hindu nation. Interestingly, Bhartiya Janata Party or BJP is the political wing of Hindu nationalist organizations.

duties, responsibilities, and rights, as well as one's relationship to the state and fellow members. In a somewhat similar vein, Tilly (1995) argues that citizen identity represents experiences and ties that individuals form with the nation-state. This identity arises from a continuous process of negotiation and contestation (Tilly 1995).

As a group membership, citizenship implies a social identity. It is impossible to perceive one's status as a citizen in isolation (Sindic 2011). It requires one to consider others as fellow citizens. Identities, in this sense, are social arrangements (Tilly 2003). They include boundaries, a set of relations, and stories about these boundaries and relations (Tilly 2003). Whereas the boundaries separate 'us' from 'them,' the shared set of relations and stories connect them (ibid.). This relational component of citizen identity is evident in Williams's (2003) emphasis on "shared fate". She argues that citizenship and related emotional responses such as loyalty, duty, or commitment inform us that citizenship is connected to the sense of self. However, she challenges the notion of citizen identity emerging out of membership of the nation-state, as with rapid globalization, citizenship is no longer connected to physical boundaries. Instead, Williams (2003) emphasizes "shared fate" and interconnected web of lives as the source of citizen identity.

Identity plays a vital role in the exclusionary politics of citizenship. When citizen identity interacts with other identities, new categories of citizens are constructed, which are often hyphenated (e.g., Asian-American, Indian-American etc.). Limits bestowed by religious, ethnic, or sexual identity, can be extended to the political field of citizenship. For example, Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) show that British Muslims often feel

restricted in their ability to perform their citizenship rights. Their Muslim identity is often misrecognized which constrains their ability to be a British citizen. Soon after the 9/11, Muslim-Americans faced moral exclusion which made them vulnerable to injustice (Opotow 2004, 2007). Zaal and colleagues' (2007) study finds that young Muslim-American women living in New York City carry hyphenated identities which grew as a response to their experience of surveillance and scrutiny at the aftermath of 9/11.

There are two sides of citizenship. On the one hand, we have the external structure of citizenship consisting of legal definitions, processes, acts, policies, as well as social and historical narratives. On the other hand, there are internal mechanisms that interact with the external structure and shape citizen identity. To examine these interactive processes, I rely on identity theories.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This project builds its argument using theories of identity and identity work. Using identity theory allows me to clarify the link between citizenship-structure and citizen-self. In addition to assisting us in conceptualizing citizen identity as a dynamic process, it also helps to establish the argument that citizens do not experience citizenship in a uniform way. I argue that despite enjoying the same legal citizenship status, citizens of a nation-state make sense of their citizen identity differently. I will be investigating this particular aspect using the lens of identity work.

Identity Theory

Identity theory investigates the link between the self and social structure (Stryker and Burke 2000). The theory grew out of the symbolic interactionist framework, which emphasizes social interactions as the basis of meanings and self (Stryker and Vryan 2006).

Symbolic interactionists were inspired by Mead's (1934) mind, self, and society and his argument that these three can only exist through continuous interaction (Blumer 1937, 1966; Kuhn 1964; Stryker 1980, 1983). Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the inseparability of the self, social structure, and behavior (Stryker and Burke 2000). Structural symbolic interactionism is a later tradition that emerged from Mead's (1934) notion that "society shapes self shapes social behavior" (Kuhn 1964; Stets and Burke 2014; Stryker 1980, 1983). The structuralist tradition considers societal structures causal priori (Kuhn 1964; Kuhn and McPartland 1954; Stryker 1980, 1983).

Although grounded in structural symbolic interactionism, identity theory grew in two complimentary directions (Stryker and Burke 2000). Stryker and Serpe's work explore how social structure shapes the self, and how the self shapes social behavior (Burke 2003; Serpe 1987; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker 1980; Stryker, Serpe, and Hunt 2005). Burke and Stets' work, on the other hand, explores cognitive mechanisms of self and explains how internal dynamics of self shape social behavior (Burke 1991, 2004; Burke and Stets 1999; Stryker and Burke 2000). This strand deals with self-verification, affective emotions, and the effect of such emotions on social relations (Burke 1991; Burke and Reitzes 1991; Burke and Stets 1999). Thus, whereas the first branch focuses on the significance of structure in shaping the self, the second branch focuses on the internal processes of self (Stryker and Burke 2000).

The first branch of identity theory argues that identities emerge only when individuals are established as social objects and they make sense of their social roles (Stryker 2008; Stryker and Serpe 1982). Our identities are grounded in social structures. As social beings, individuals are assigned social designations and roles (e.g., parents,

siblings, teachers, friends) (Stryker 2007, 2008). Identities refer to "self-cognitions tied to roles" and social designations (Stryker 2008: 20). These roles are relational and connect individuals with the structure (Stryker and Serpe 1982). For example, roles that individuals play as spouses or parents not only position them within the family structure but also connect them with others as these roles are contingent upon others' roles as spouses or children. Self, therefore, is consisted of multiple identities and identities are social designations internalized by the individuals (Stryker 1980, 2008). Citizen literature has considered citizenship as a role and a tie (Tilly 1995). Stryker's and colleagues' work on identity allows us to conceptualize citizenship as a structure. Their work also allows us to argue that citizen identity is derived from the roles and responsibilities that come with citizenship status, as well as from the relationships with fellow citizens.

The second branch of identity theory, which Burke and colleagues established, focuses on the cognitive processes of self, such as affirmation of identities, trust, and commitment (Burke and Stets 1999). This line of work argues that "identity is a set of "meanings"" (Burke 1991:837). Individuals internalize the meaning associated with a particular identity and use these meanings to guide their behavior and interactions (Burke and Tully 1977). Individuals hold themselves accountable in terms of their meanings for their roles (Burke 1991; Stets and Burke 2014). Playing an identity thus means fulfilling the meanings that come with identities.

Burke, Stets, and colleagues' work examines the process of self-verification. Here, the self and social behavior are treated as a cyclical process. Individuals hold themselves to an identity standard by a frame of reference constituted of subjective meanings they hold for roles (Burke 2004). During social interactions, this frame of

reference acts as a guide. Individuals carefully choose to perform those particular behaviors that align with their frame of reference (Burke and Tully 1977; Burke and Reitzes 1981; Stets and Burke 2014). When internal standards that one holds for an identity match the feedback received on the role's performance, the self is verified (Burke and Stets 1999; Riley and Burke 1995; Stryker and Burke 2000). When the self is verified, individuals experience positive emotions. Since the process is inherently interactional, this positive emotion is extended to others. Individuals experience feelings of trust towards those who help to verify the self. Thus, repeated interactions with specific others help the formation of a collective by reducing uncertainty and promoting trust and commitment (Burke 2004).

This project draws its primary rationale from identity theory. The first line of research by Stryker and colleagues allows us a thorough understanding of how self and structure shape one another. Based on this strand of identity work, I situate citizen identity as a socially acknowledged position or role offered by the citizenship structure. The second strand of identity research by Stets and Burke helps us to understand the role of meaning in shaping identity. A nation and its people participate in a collective and discursive process of creating meaning related to citizen and citizenship. Since citizen identity is connected to a set of meanings, when meanings are altered, it affects citizen identity. Thus, I argue that the changes introduced by the CAA will require citizen identity to readjust. Since the meanings associated with an identity is a source of self-verification, we must consider that systemic exclusion introduced by CAA will also bring changes to the subjective standards of meanings that individuals carry for each identity. Thus, it will make citizen identity verification harder for some citizens. Identity theory

allows us to understand that identities are dynamic, and when structural changes occur, identities must be readjusted. Citizen identity, thus, is a continuous process. To understand this process, we now turn towards identity work.

Identity Work

Self and social realities are interlinked. According to the social-cognitive model of self, developed by Berzonsky (1988, 1990), identity is a self-constructed theory of self. Self-theories are comprised of beliefs, values, assumptions, experiences relevant to the self, and offer a "conceptual frame for encoding, organizing, and understanding experiences and identity-relevant information." (Berzonsky 2011:56). Self-theories thus play a significant role in making sense of everyday life and the world that surrounds us (Berzonsky 2013). What we refer to as 'reality' differs for each person and can only become intelligible to an individual when it is processed in relation to one's self-theories (Kelly1955; Berzonsky 2011). Realities, thus, are subjective constructions and dependent upon personal experience (Kelly 1955). Kelly's (1955) theory of personal constructs emphasizes the role experiences play a key role in shaping our realities. Thus, people with similar experiences, carry a similar understanding of social realities (ibid.) Since experiences are contingent upon social identities, each of us, based on our various social identity positions, create individualized lenses with which we construe our realities. I argue that because citizens have different constellations of identities that intersect with their citizen identity, we cannot expect citizens to experience citizenship in a uniform way.

Identity work is the process that individuals deploy to make sense of self and other (Ainsworth and Hardy 2009; Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996; Snow and Anderson 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008). Identities are referred to as "signifiers of the self" (Ezzell 2009). Identity work is also known as identity management, identity project, and identity construction (Watson 2008). The constructivist approach heavily influences this line of thought. Identity work is defined as the "interpretive activity related to the reproduction and transformation of self-identity" (Ainsworth and Hardy 2009: 1201). Thus, it refers to a variety of activities that individuals engage in to create a sense of personal identities (Snow and Anderson 1987; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). Snow and Anderson (1987) distinguish between personal identities and self-concept and argue that individuals try to build and sustain personal identities in harmony with their self-concept. Snow and Anderson's (1987) argument supports the notion of self-verification discussed earlier (Burke and Tully 1977; Burke 2004).

Researchers find that how people make sense of their identities can be investigated using identity talk (Hunt and Benford 1994; Hunt and Miller 1997; Snow and Anderson 1987). Identity talk is often conceptualized as “impression management work” where it is accomplished “via words, deeds, and images” (Hunt and Benford 1994: 491; Hunt and Miller 1997). Studies of identity talk explore how "definitions of situations, motives, identities, and other meanings are constituted socially" (Hunt and Benford 1994:491). In this sense, identity talk is regarded as a discourse that informs us of an individual's perception of the social order, interactions, and experiences (ibid.). Identity talk includes identity attribution and identity avowal (Hunt, Benford, and

Snow 1994). Identity attribution refers to the claims that social actors make about their own or others' identities. Identity avowal refers to the process whereby individuals receive positive affirmation for their identities (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). For instance, Snow and Anderson's (1987) study of identity work among the homeless shows that the participants often embraced the social categories such as "tramp" or "bum", which are usually attributed to homeless individuals. The authors argue that such embracement leads to the avowal of their social identities. The concept of identity avowal is similar to Stets and Burke's concept of self-verification (Burke et al. 2007; Stets and Burke 2014).

Identity work is not an "a-social" process (Watson 2008:127). Because meanings are socially constructed, confirmation or verification of identity is subject to social scrutiny (Stets and Burke 2014). The process of identity work thus relies on social discourses (such as gender, race, religion, sexuality), social interactions, and experiences (Ainsworth and Hardy 2009; Alvesson and Willmott 2002; McInnes and Corlett 2012). While doing *identity work*, individuals consider how others view them in social situations (Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Ainsworth & Hardy 2009). We imagine ourselves in others' positions and visualize ourselves through others' eyes in imagined social interactions (Cooley 1902). Such practices help us to manage our identity. The CAA is amending India's original citizenship law by including a clause that allows the government to discriminate against people seeking citizenship based on their religion. By reducing the eligibility criteria to five years for Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Parsis (while for Muslims, the number of years remains eleven), the Act explicitly redraws

India’s citizenship boundary. Thus, we can expect a change in India’s citizenship discourse and citizen identity.

Goffman's (1978) concept of impression management, which compares social interactions with staged performances, is a form of identity work. The individual, just like an actor, maintains a front. A front includes not just the actor (the performance), but social settings as well (Ibid.). For instance, when an individual wants to maintain their impression as a teacher, not only must they carry themselves in a manner that is collectively recognized as befitting a teacher, but they will require the settings such as a classroom and students as the audience. In the case of established social roles like teachers, students, parents, police officers, managers, the front is already well-established, and individuals who take on such roles must try to fit into it.

Goffman's approach to identity work thus suggests that identity work is dependent on socially available discourses (Watson 2008). Individuals use available discourses to build and support their self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Studies focusing on organizational identities show that individuals draw from many organizational and other discourses to create a concept of self (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). With structural changes, society must produce new discourses so that individuals can adjust their identity. For instance, when managerial positions were occupied by men, organizational discourses supported men and masculinity. As women started occupying managerial positions, organizations had to readjust these discourses (Fondas 1997; Alvession and Willmott 2002).

There are several ways in which social discourses are manipulated to make sense of self. Sometimes, individuals point out specific characteristics linked to social positions (such as 'nurturing' mother or 'masculine' firefighter). In other cases, they seek to depict the self by defining a specific other (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). For example, if a group perceives itself as avowed Christians, the members may claim their Christian identity by contrasting and comparing themselves with other individuals they perceive as non-Christians. Group categorization is also used to describe self (Turner 1982; Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Such processes have been widely studied using social identity theory (Tajfel 1978) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987). These theories explain the connection between the self and the larger collective. As members of the collective, individuals perceive themselves as an interchangeable exemplar of the in-group (Hogg and Turner 1987; Turner et al. 1994). Simultaneously, individuals who are affiliated with other groups are also perceived as interchangeable exemplars of that group.

During identity work, individuals identify with certain social identities and distance themselves from other social identities. The distancing has been referred to as *defensive othering* (Ezzell 2009). While studying female rugby players of a university of southwestern USA, Ezzell (2009) finds that the female players distanced themselves from other women in the university by referring to them as weak. Doing so helped them to identify with the stronger and dominant group (men). Snow and Anderson (1987) find similar examples of distancing in their study among homeless people. Killian and Johnson's (2006) study of North African immigrant women in France shows that some immigrant women distance themselves from the immigrant label, which is often

considered low status. While these studies are specifically focused on stigmatized labels and identity management, distancing is a common form of identity work.

Construction of self is a "two-ended thing" with contrasting ends (Kelly 1955:346). In one end resides similarities of likeness, whereas the other end features dislikes and dissimilarities. Behaviors and interactions follow this rule of comparison and contrast. As individuals interpret others, they create a system that defines themselves (ibid.). For instance, when we refer to someone as 'ungrateful,' not only are we attributing the adjective to define the other person but defining ourselves as 'not ungrateful.' This self-identification and self-disidentification have also been referred to as 'Me' and 'Not-Me' (McCall 2003). In the case of identity claims, self-disidentification plays a crucial role.

This project investigates the identity work that individuals engage in to make sense of their citizen identity. Identity talk, impression management, defensive-othering, and self-disidentification are some of the ways in which identity work manifests itself. Employing identity theories and identity work help gain a more comprehensive as well as nuanced understanding of each individual defines citizenship and makes sense of their own identities as citizens.

Structural Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism has traditionally focused on symbols, meanings, and interactions guided by those meanings (Blumer 1969). Blumer (1969) postulates three

interconnected processes: our interactions and actions are guided by the meanings that we hold for things, these meanings are constructed collectively through interactions, and an interpretive process guides these meanings and interactions. Blumer also prescribes certain methodological principles such as engaging in qualitative research, refraining from formulating hypotheses, and using existing literature while doing sociological social psychological research. Blumer's emphasis on subjectivity created a methodological dilemma and motivated researchers to find an alternate path that led to structural symbolic interactionism.

The structural symbolic interactionist tradition puts a greater emphasis on the structure than on the interaction. The field began with Iowa school, and more specifically, with Manfred Kuhn, who grew impatient with symbolic interactionists' overarching emphasis on subjectivity and lack of a comprehensive theory of self (Katovich et al. 2003). Unlike other symbolic interactionists of his time, who believed in a fluid and continuously emerging self, Kuhn and his associates embarked on a journey to measure self (Twenty Question Test, Significant Other Test) (Carter and Fuller 2016; Katovich et al. 2003; Kuhn 1964; Kuhn and McPartland 1954). Kuhn believed that a systematic study of social behaviors and actions can help us to generate a scientific theory of self (Katovich et al. 2003). Kuhn and colleagues' attempts, however, suffered from a great deficiency as they could not invent a way to capture or analyze social processes (Couch 1984).

According to the structural symbolic interactionist tradition, social structures play a significant role in grounding the meanings and constraining the patterns of interactions

and actions (Stryker 2006; Stryker, Serpe, and Powell 2020). While structural symbolic interactionists agree that society and self are two sides of the same coin, “society is assigned a causal priority” for methodological purposes (Stryker 2006: 223). For example, if we embark on a discussion related to citizenship, not only are we guided by the meanings we have assigned to the term, but also operating within a structure that limits our possibilities by limiting “the kinds of definitions available to call into play” (Stryker 2006:226). This tradition also emphasizes the importance of structure in limiting the definitions that social actors can use in any interaction (Stryker 1983; Stryker 2006). Stryker (1983) specifically mentions class and power and argues that considering these structures can help explain the complexities of the social world. Moreover, structures such as class, caste, race, and age play significant roles in group formation and affect interactions (ibid.). Thus, structural symbolic interactionism bridges micro-level processes with macro-social structures (Kuhn 1964; Stryker 1980, 1983; Stryker, Serpe, and Hunt 2005; Stryker, Serpe, and Powell 2020). I particularly chose Structural Symbolic Interactionism with the intention of building a theoretical bridge between micro-level and macro-level understandings of citizenship.

CHAPTER IV

BACKGROUND

Citizenship Amendment Act

With the Citizenship Amendment Act, we witness a crucial shift in India's citizenship and national identity project. The Act, commonly known as CAA, was passed in December 2019. The Act means to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 of the Indian constitution. Previously, the citizenship law stated that to be eligible for citizenship, the applicant must reside or work in India for eleven years. The Amendment was brought to fast-track the citizenship process for specific non-Muslim communities of the three neighboring Islamic countries: Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The BJP government brings the eleven-year requirement down to five years to provide sanctuary to non-Muslim minorities who have been facing religious persecution in these neighboring Muslim majority nations. The Amendment thus fast tracks the process to gain citizenship for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians. Muslims were excluded from the list.

The Amendment triggered a countrywide protest by citizens who fear that this Amendment furthers the Hindu nationalist movement's agenda of establishing India as a Hindu nation. By relaxing the citizenship criteria for selected religious communities, the Amendment violates the constitution's principle of secularity (Gauba and Singh 2017; Kumar 2018; Thakur 2018). The argument about protecting the prosecuted communities based on religious beliefs also seems unwarranted as the Act does not protect the Muslim minorities such as Baha'is, Shias, and Ahmadiyyas, who also face persecution in these three neighboring nations (Kumar 2018; Akins 2020). Neither does the Act protect Rohingya Muslims who fled from Myanmar and took refuge in India.

The anti-CAA protests brought people from all classes and religious backgrounds together. Student organizations, Muslim organizations, women's organizations, and Dalit[17] organizations played a major part in the anti-CAA protests. Students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (Delhi), Jamia Milia Islamia (Delhi), Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh), and Jadavpur University (Kolkata, West Bengal) started raising objections against the Act. During one of the protest rallies, Jamia Milia Islamia students got into a clash with the police (Ibrar 2019). A few days later, police barged into Jamia's campus and left several students severely injured (Press Trust of India[a] 2019). Students were attacked with batons, bullets, and teargas (Ellis-Peterson 2019). Police were also accused of using violence against Aligarh Muslim University (Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh) students and that of some other Northeastern universities (Press Trust of India[b] 2019). These violent acts inspired solidarity among university students across India and

[17] The term Dalit refers to people who do not fall into the four-fold caste (Varna) system and systematically discriminated against for hundreds of years as outcasts and untouchables.

motivated them to take part in protests. As of December 16, 2019, students of almost twenty universities became involved (Nanda 2019; Press Trust of India[c] 2019). Protest rallies occurred in at least seventeen cities (Slater and Masih 2019). Political parties, civic-social organizations, and regular citizens also organized and joined these rallies.

The CAA also created the ground for communal (Hindu-Muslim) tensions. On February 23, 2020, Kapil Mishra, a BJP leader, gave a speech in response to an anti CAA sit-in protest organized by women in the Jaffrabad area of Northeast Delhi (Sharma 2020). The rally was organized by a women's association named Pinjra Tod, which has been protesting against the CAA since December 2019. Mishra gave an ultimatum to the protesters and asked police to clear the roads blocked by the protesters. Within hours of this ultimatum, a riot broke out and soon turned communal (Hindu-Muslim riot). In the next few days, over 45 people died, over 200 were injured, and many went missing. The deceased's list suggests that Muslims were most affected by the riot (The Polis Project 2020).

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

To study how individuals make sense of the CAA, Indian citizenship, and their citizen identity, I conducted semi-structured interviews. I also used stimulus texts to elicit responses, NVivo to organize the data, and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to guide the analysis. This is an oral history project that captures ordinary individuals' fears, hopes, opinions, and thoughts regarding the CAA and citizenship. I discuss the methodology in the next sub-sections and provide a detailed outline of each step.

Qualitative Research Design

I used qualitative research design in this project. Semi-structured interviews are standard data collection methods in qualitative citizenship studies. Interviews are conducted to gather subjective views of individuals on the topic (Kajornboon 2005).

During interviews, respondents can discuss their experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes related to the research topic (Kajornboon 2005; Peters and Halcomb 2014). For example, Hopkins and Blackwood (2011), in their study of everyday citizenship practices of British Muslim citizens, use interviews to analyze how religious identity interacts with one's citizen identity. Howard's (1998) study, which analyzes what it means to be Canadian, also relied on interview data. Gibson and Hamilton's (2011) study on polity membership and associated rights and duties and Nordberg's (2006) study on the social process of claiming citizenship and justifying belongingness also relied on interviews.

Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to gain insight into how one defines citizenship. Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between unstructured conversations and structured interviews. Although these interviews follow a pre-decided set of open-ended questions, interviewers can include additional questions in response to the turn of the conversation (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006; Hannan 2007). Thus, interviews allow researchers to gain insights into the "interviewee's framework of meaning" (Britten 1995:251). These interviews take the form of conversations where respondents enjoy the freedom to discuss the aspects, they find essential (Longhurst 2003).

Stimulus Texts

During the interviews, I used four stimulus texts to elicit information related to the CAA and citizenship: two news reports, a poem, and an image with a headline. Artifacts, such as articles, photos, videos, diagrams, sketches, or paintings, are referred to

as stimulus texts when used in interviews to elicit information (Törrönen 2002; Crilly et al. 2006; Stacey and Vincent 2011). They are used to engage the respondents and motivate them to discuss a specific topic (Törrönen 2002). Artifacts are "cultural products made up of signs and signification systems" (Törrönen's 2002:344). Meanings are produced discursively, and no two interpretations of a specific artifact are exactly the same. Hence, researchers use stimulus texts to explore different perceptions (Mills and Hoeber 2013; Törrönen's 2002; Stacey and Vincent 2011). They allow researchers to elicit context-specific content, which has been proven most useful while analyzing people's beliefs, norms, perceptions, and attitudes (Gould 1996; Bendelow 2008; Barter and Renold 1999).

Citizenship is a cultural product. The concept carries different meanings and significance to different people. As a researcher, I am interested in exploring how individuals' lived experiences shape their perception of the CAA and citizenship. Using stimulus texts, along with semi-structured interviews, helped to elicit in-depth information and gain nuanced insight. Since my objective is to analyze micro-level citizenship processes in the light of the CAA, using stimulus texts related to the CAA grounded the discussion in this particular context and helped me understand how the respondents perceive this phenomenon.

For the employment of stimulus texts, I followed Törrönen's guidelines. Törrönen (2002) argues that one must thoroughly analyze cultural products while looking for appropriate and 'fertile' stimulus texts (pg. 344). These texts represent a significant event related to the phenomenon under research. They present an interpretation of the

phenomenon to the respondents, who then use the stimulus texts to reinterpret the phenomenon (Törrönen 2002). Thus, by using stimulus texts, researchers enable the respondents to bring forth their lived experiences and subjective cultural understanding (ibid.). According to Törrönen (2002), researchers can use stimulus texts as *clues*, *microcosms*, or *provokers*. As *clues*, stimulus texts represent the context and the subject matter to the interviewee (Törrönen 2002; Vincent and Stacey 2013). For example, in their study of alcohol as a social problem, Törrönen and Sulkunen (1997) used film and video excerpts as clues to explore respondents' perceptions of alcohol consumption, prevention, and treatment. These excerpts offered a guideline to the respondents who used their cultural knowledge and experience to interpret the tex. When presented as *microcosms*, stimulus texts represent a specific viewpoint to the respondents and encourage them to evaluate the texts' credibility in relation to their own knowledge and experience. They must imitate the phenomenon under research by situating it within the context. Microcosms can elicit responses about one's values, beliefs, and identities (Törrönen 2002). As microcosms, stimulus texts help gain data on respondents' positions concerning the topic under research (Törrönen 2002; Vincent and Stacey 2013; Stacey and Vincent 2011). Lastly, when used as *provokers*, stimulus texts challenge established notions and attitudes (Törrönen 2002).

I used two news articles, one poem (video format), and a Reuter photo with the headline as stimulus texts in the project. These stimulus texts served as *clues*, *microcosms,* and *provokers*. Since sensitive questions are advised to be included at the later stage of the interview (Smith and Osborn 2003), I used sensitive stimulus texts (for example, the poem and the photo) at the later stage of the interview.

The news articles were the first to be used, followed by the poem and photo. One of these articles reported a speech by the prime minister of India supporting the CAA, while the other reported an oppositional view. Both news articles presented the news in a matter-of-fact manner. These texts served as clues and microcosms. As clues, they allowed the respondents to reinterpret the texts when paired with open-ended questions. As microcosms, they allowed the respondents to compare their positions with the views presented by the articles.

The first news article was published in the Times of India. On December 22, 2019, Narendra Modi gave a speech at the Ramleela ground in Delhi. He asserted that the CAA poses no threat to Indian Muslim citizens and has been passed "for the benefit of the Dalits, poor and the oppressed class." This article, titled "*Citizenship law & NRC has nothing to do with Indian Muslims: PM Narendra Modi*" (ToI 2019), gave the respondents a clear idea of the ruling party's stance on the CAA. The second article, "*CAA violates constitutional provisions: Amartya Sen*," was published in The Economic Times on January 8, 2020 (PTI 2020). This article presents an oppositional view. The economist and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen states that the act violates secular constitutional provisions as it prioritizes religion while considering citizenship claims. Although, according to him, a foreign Hindu national's suffering should be considered with sympathy, "it [consideration for citizenship] has to be independent of religion but take cognizance of the sufferings and other issues into account." Like the previous article, this one maintains a neutral approach while presenting Sen's view. This article clarified respondents on the oppositional standpoint (PTI 2020).

The third stimulus text I used is a poem (video format) uploaded by Scoop Whoop on YouTube. Scoop Whoop is a Delhi-based digital media company. The video titled "Main Inkaar Karta Hoon - I Refuse" is 2 minutes and 23-second-long and captures one of the anti-CAA protests in Jantar Mantar, Delhi, on January 19, 2019 (ScoopWhoop Unscripted 2019). This unique video presents a poem expressing strong dissent against the CAA. In this video, Amir Aziz, the poet, activist, and former student of Delhi's Jamia Milia Islamia University, recites his poem standing on the protest ground. The poem explains the threat that the CAA poses to people. This poem primarily functions as a microcosm. I used this to elicit the narrator's attitude towards the CAA and the protest message.

The fourth stimulus text is a photo with a headline that says, "A mob out for blood: India's protests pit Hindus against Muslims" (Siddiqui and Ghoshal 2020). The photo shows a mob armed with sticks and rods hitting a man named Mohammad Zubair. I chose this photo as it became the first photo of the Delhi riot. The photo became viral through media channels and social media posts. Anti-CAA protest was the central issue of the riot. This text served as a *microcosm* and *provoked* respondents to reflect on their positions and attitudes regarding the CAA, anti-CAA protests, and the Delhi riot.

Recruitment Process, COVID-19, and Maneuvering Territories of Online Interviews with International Participants During the Pandemic

The recruitment process started in January 2021 after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I used both purposive and snowball sampling to reach

potential respondents. Purposive sampling is a recruitment tool where the researcher purposefully targets respondents because of the qualities they possess (Tongco 2007; Etikan et al. 2016). It is non-randomized and does not accurately represent the population (Etikan et al. 2016). It is also useful when the researcher deals with a large population with limited resources (Etikan et al. 2016). Using a purposive technique in this project allowed easier recruitment and helped finish the project on time.

My choices in terms of modes of the interview were limited. When I started the recruitment process, the SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 was a little older than one year. In Oklahoma, USA, we were slowly getting back to everyday life. We maintained distance in classrooms, and masks were mandatory everywhere within the university. We were hoping to get the vaccine within a couple of months. However, traveling to India from the USA was still a high-risk endeavor. International flights had not yet resumed their normal schedule. Therefore, I settled for Zoom interviews. I conducted phone interviews in cases where Zoom was not accessible to the respondent.

There were two key contact people through whom I reached out to most of my participants. Both are based in India. They were critical to this project due to several reasons. First, they fit the demographic and educational criteria I have been interested in. Second, both persons have a diverse and expansive friend and acquaintance circle. One lived in Delhi when the CAA was passed and during the protests and riots. I created a flyer and sent it to both of them. They contacted their relatives, friends, and acquaintances and sent me a list of people interested in participating.

I used social media platforms such as What's App, Instagram, and Facebook throughout the recruitment stage. Occasionally, I also used a paid international calling app named Rebtel. What's app's messaging, phone call, and video call options made international communication easy and cost-effective. The end-to-end encryption system of What's App, which only allows the communicating users privy to data transmitted through the app, also made communication relatively safer. I used Rebtel to call those respondents who did not use What's App. Unlike What's App, which allowed both messaging, audio calls, and video-calling facilities, Rebtel only allowed audio calling from my side.

I followed a thorough system during the recruitment process for later reference. Once I received a name and a phone number, my first task was to check whether the person used What's App. If I could find them in What's App, I would send them a brief message mentioning my name and that of my referee (the key contact person), my project, and my objectives. In most cases, I heard back within a day or two. Once I heard back from them and received a positive response, I requested a 10-minute phone appointment to discuss the project, the forms, and other technicalities in detail.

As this project deals with politically heated issues, I expected hesitancy from potential participants. In several cases, I never heard back from the participant. In a couple of such cases, I tried to initiate another communication after a few weeks, but to no avail. In some cases, the person politely rejected; in others, the communication continued until the 10-minute pre-interview phone conversation before the person decided not to participate.

Once the respondent and I discussed the project, its objectives, the interview process, the forms, and the archival process, I answered any questions the respondents had. After that, I asked them whether they were still interested in participating. If they agreed, we scheduled a suitable date and time, ideally a week later. Once the interviews were scheduled, I sent the forms and stimulus texts to the respondents.

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a significant obstruction in the recruitment and interview process. I started interviewing on February 2nd and completed a third of the total interviews by February 2021. However, things slowed down significantly after that. By mid-April, India was facing a second surge of infection. Several of my participants had to cancel interviews in April and May due to Coronavirus infections in the family. One of the potential respondents called off the interview on the very day of the interview due to a death in the family.

Navigating the international timeline was also a hurdle. When I started the interview process (February 2021), daylight saving was not on, and the time difference between Stillwater, Oklahoma, and India was eleven hours and thirty minutes. Past March 14th, as daylight saving began, this difference became ten hours and thirty minutes. Thus, I conducted most of the interviews either early in the morning or late at night. While for most interviewees, I had to consider Indian Standard Time (IST), I conducted three interviews with participants based in European countries. I managed time according to Central European Time (CET) or CEST (Central European Summer Time). Two of my participants were living in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Narrators

Demographic Characteristics	Pro-CAA	Anti-CAA	Partial Support	Total
Gender				
Men	5	12	3	20
Women	1	6	2	9
Non-binary	0	1	0	1
Age				
26-30	3	14	4	21
31-35	2	4	1	7
36-40	1	0	0	1
41>	0	1	0	1
Educational Level				
Master's degree	3	15	4	22
Bachelor's degree	2	4	1	7
High School	0	0	0	0
Secondary School	1	0	0	1
First Language				
Assamese	0	1	0	1
Bengali	0	10	1	11
Gujarati	0	0	1	1
Hindi	4	5	2	11
Marathi	1	2	1	4
Oriya	1	0	0	1
Tamil	0	1	0	1

Conducting Online Interviews

For interviews, I prioritized Zoom and phone calls. All the interviewees received a Zoom link for the interview. The Zoom links for each interview were generated using the Oklahoma State University's Oral History Research Program's official Zoom account. Pro Zoom account allowed me to record the interviews. I did not

use any additional method of recording. Although it is advised to use multiple recording devices, I found that using another application along with Zoom unnecessarily complicates the process. In a few cases, Zoom did not work due to a network issue on the respondent's side. In those cases, I opted for a phone call. The phone calls were made using Rebtel, a low-cost alternative for international calls, or What's app's voice call feature. In these cases, I connected my phone to a recording device to record the interviews.

Each interview was preceded by a five to ten-minute general discussion about expectations and formalities such as signing Informed Consent and Deed of Gifts. Before each interview began, I ensured the respondent read and signed the forms. In most cases, we discussed the forms again and then signed them. Since the data will be a part of a public archive, many respondents had questions about maintaining anonymity. In these cases, I re-explained the removal process of identifiers and assured them that a rigorous process was in place to protect the identity of respondents. I also ensured that all of the respondents' questions were answered thoroughly. Next, I asked the respondent's permission to start the interview, hit the record button, and started the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, I asked each narrator demographic questions with intermittent follow-up questions that highlighted the narrator's childhood, education, religious beliefs, hobbies, choices, likes, and dislikes. At the beginning of the interview, such questions have proven to build rapport and put both the narrator and the interviewee at ease (Smith 1995; Borkoles et al. 2008). In the case of IPA research, however, such questions can be helpful in unearthing important stories, allowing the researcher to

understand the hermeneutic circle—the interaction between the part and the whole. For example, one of the narrators explained his experience with caste-related discrimination while answering demographic questions. He reflected upon how his understanding of citizenship has been shaped by this experience. In the latter half of the interview, we moved to more politically loaded questions such as citizenship, the Citizenship Amendment Act, and their own positions regarding the Act. Doing so led to a free and open conversation.

The interviews were semi-structured. There were a few questions that I asked every narrator. I also discussed the stimulus texts with each one of them. Other than that, the interview was guided by the response provided by the narrator. I practiced active listening during the interview and followed through with prompts or follow-up questions. Most of the interviews were in English, with a few exceptions where the narrators, upon asking, expressed their preference for either Bengali or Hindi (languages). In these cases, I conducted the interviews in those languages.

I interviewed 30 respondents. Since I recruited most of them via two key contact persons, these respondents share one or more demographic characteristics with the key contacts. Nine of these respondents self-identify as women, twenty as men, and one as non-binary. Five respondents are connected to LGBTQIA+ communities. Besides a few exceptions, all are college graduates or hold higher-level university degrees and belong to middle-class families. All respondents are over 25 years and either working full-time in various sectors or pursuing higher degrees.

Each interview session took about an hour. The shortest interview was a little over 30 minutes, and the longest was about two hours. Five interviews were transcribed by a transcription service agency. I transcribed the rest of the interviews. Several narrators used Hindi words or sentences during the interview. I translated them and included a bracketed note to identify those portions. In cases where I felt that a word could not be translated perfectly, I did a loose translation and kept the sentence as it is in parentheses. I also removed repetitions, "um," and "uh" during transcription. I organized and coded the data using NVivo.

Ethical Rigor

To maintain ethical standards of human subject research and transparency, two forms were explained, discussed, and signed by both the respondent and the researcher. These were *Informed Consent* and *Deed of Gift*. Both forms were constructed to address the issue of remote interviewing due to the pandemic (COVID-19). The Oral History Research Program of Oklahoma State University helped me to create these forms. These were available as JotForm.

The *Informed consent form* explained the objectives and scope of the project, data collection process, preservation of collected data, use, access, and dissemination of data, as well as narrators' rights and associated risks. These points were explained and discussed with the respondents during the pre-interview phone conversations. The respondents were sent a link to the form days before the interview, and each respondent signed this form before the interview.

The second form was a *Deed of Gift* which serves several purposes. First, this form ensured that the narrator shares the rights to interview recordings, transcripts, and other materials with Oklahoma State University. Second, it allows the narrators to express their terms and conditions in written format. The narrators can restrict how they want the data to be used or disseminated. The narrators were sent a link to the form days before the interview, and each respondent read and signed this form before the interview. Several narrators chose to put some form of restriction, such as maintaining anonymity or restricting public access for a number of years. One of the narrators restricted public access to the data, and this interview will not be donated to the archive. However, I have obtained permission to use this data for research and publication.

Risks and Risk Perception

While submitting the project to the Oklahoma State University IRB, it was mentioned in the draft of the Informed Consent form that there is no risk associated with participation in this study that is greater than the risk we face in our everyday lives. It was also mentioned and explained that the narrator can withdraw without prejudice and choose not to answer specific questions. The narrator could also choose to remain anonymous. In practice, however, there were some calculated risks that the narrators and I, as a researcher, took.

Risk is not an objective reality. Risk perception can be guided by an individual's geographical location, social position, political environment, and subjective understanding. During the pre-interview session, most of the narrators expressed concern

about their safety, given the political climate in India. With the enactment of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 2019, the BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) government arrested several anti-CAA protesters. Student activists and youth leaders like Safoora Zargar, Meeran Haider, Umar Khalid, Devangana Kalita, Natasha Narwal, Khalid Saifi, and many other anti-CAA protesters were arrested as alleged 'conspirators.' The political state of India, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, has been referred to as "authoritarian populism," one that is determined to use the state machinery to suppress dissidents (Nilsen 2021:10). The UAPA, a "draconian anti-terrorism law" has been used against CAA protesters and other dissenters (Nilsen 2021:12). Therefore, wariness on the part of the narrators is warranted.

Although I live in the USA, being an Indian citizen, I am not above these risks. Since I decided to carry forward this project, I have contemplated and discussed possible risks with my family, friends, advisor, and colleagues. I also made confident choices to mitigate some of these risks. For example, despite receiving advice to use social media accounts such as Twitter and Instagram to recruit narrators, I refrained from using social media accounts for recruitment. Although I created an Instagram account to reach out to a few potential narrators, I did not use the account for recruitment purposes. I focused on recruiting through my key contact people and snowball sampling to avoid unnecessary attention. Since my family lives in India, I have been concerned about their safety. In the current political climate, it is not unheard of for police to arrest family members and relatives of the person they are looking for and detain them until the person appears in front of the police (Trivedi 2020).

Most of the narrators wanted to keep their identities hidden. Before these interviews are archived, I will hide their names and other identifiers from audio files and transcripts. Although Zoom interviews captured video files, all these files will be destroyed. For narrators who did not want to remain anonymous, no changes will be made to their files. However, I will use pseudonyms for all narrators for research and publication purposes.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

To analyze the data, I relied on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis or IPA. IPA situates the data within the context of the respondents' experiences (Smith 2004; Larkin et al. 2006; Noon 2017). Thus, IPA researchers look for a detailed first-person account (Smith et al. 2009). *Hermeneutics*, or the practice of interpretation that reveals the meaning-making process, guides IPA (Shinebourne 2011). The method demands *double hermeneutics* since, during the research process, not only do respondents try to make sense of their own experience, but the researchers try to interpret the process through which the respondents make sense of a phenomenon (Smith 2004; Smith and Osborn 2007, Smith et al. 2009). Researchers choose either the descriptive (Husserl) or interpretive (Heidegger) phenomenological approach when the objective is to explore "how an individual's consciousness perceives their description or interpretation" of the phenomenon under research (Reiners 2012:2). During the analysis, I took the interpretive route.

I chose IPA for several reasons. First, this study is premised on the argument that each person experiences citizenship and makes sense of citizen identity in distinct ways because realities are subjective and linked to identity positions. This study aims to capture the worlds and experiences of each of the respondents. IPA is useful for studies involving self and subjective meaning-making (Smith 2004). Second, since my objective is to investigate how people make sense of Indian citizenship, CAA, and citizen identity, IPA's commitment to in-depth qualitative analysis of meaning-making makes it an ideal choice for this study (Smith and Osborne 2007). Third, IPA suggests that during the interview process, meaning is co-constructed through the interaction between the researcher and the narrator (Sinclair and Milner 2005). Since oral history shares the same ideology, these two methods are compatible. Last, IPA's commitment to understanding the narrator's lived experience requires the researcher's commitment to interpretive, reflexive, and idiographic inquiry (Sinclair and Milner 2005; Smith and Osborne 2007a; Smith and Osborne 2015). The researcher explores the narrator's subjective experience by situating it in the narrator's world (Smith and Osborne 2007a). Although citizenship is a legal status ascribed by the state, it is not experienced in a homogenous way by all citizens. How people make sense of their citizen identity needs careful attention. Using IPA allows me to explore how each respondent experiences the CAA— their fears, hopes, and struggles in relation to their identity positions and social experiences.

IPA enables the researcher to capture the unique experience of individuals (Shaw 2001). As social science researchers, we are often too busy establishing our interpretations on positivist grounds. We focus on common themes and overlook the differences. We overlook that two individuals can have the same outlook toward an

event, but they make sense of things differently. IPA allows both in-depth study and abstract understanding of a phenomenon. The latter is important for generalization, but the in-depth analysis is significant for understanding micro-level processes of meaning-making. IPA is often used in psychological research (pain, trauma, etc.). From a Sociological Social Psychologist's standpoint, I see a lot of potential in IPA.

Using IPA helped me to commit to understanding lived experiences and the subjective world of the respondents. It allowed me the freedom of "free textual analysis." Hence, I let the codes appear from the data instead of using pre-determined codes. I started by reading and re-reading each narrative. The goal was to understand how each narrator made sense of events. I paid attention to words, phrases, and metaphors. For example, I noted how narrators metaphorically referred to India as *Home* and how the term *culture* was used differently to support and oppose the CAA. I "engaged in an interpretive relationship with the transcript" (Smith and Osborn 2007:66).

The next steps included abstraction, organization, and making sense– I identified emerging themes, focused on finding common themes across narratives, and organized them. These steps are essential as such abstraction helps the researcher to simplify the findings. The themes emerging due to the abstraction process allow us to communicate the findings to a non-specialized audience. These findings are particularly effective for policy-oriented research. The abstraction process led to several themes (codes) and sub-themes (sub-codes).

Codes

I guided the analysis process with an inductive approach. Main codes were simply named after the research questions or stimulus texts. For example, one of the main codes is "*Views Toward the CAA- Making Sense.*" Under this code, I included all those instances where the narrators communicated an attempt to discuss the CAA in forms of explanation, justification, or refutation. Another code, "*Perception Toward Citizenship*," was created after the first research question that guides this project. The narrators' values and beliefs regarding citizenship were captured under this code. A third code, "*Making Sense of Citizen Identity,*" is connected to the second research question. I also created two main codes to capture the responses toward two stimulus texts. These codes were named after the stimulus texts— "*Stimulus Text-Poem by Aziz*" and "*Stimulus Text-A Mob Out for Blood*." Finally, some of these principal codes were accompanied by sub-codes. For instance, "*Views Toward the CAA- Making Sense*" is connected to sub-codes such as "*Divide-and-Rule Politics*" and "*Religion and Citizenship.*"

Oral History

I worked with the Oral History Research Program of Oklahoma State University throughout the duration of this project. The audio files and transcripts collected during this project will be stored in their archive. This oral history project intends to collect, record, and archive ordinary people's memories of the CAA. Oral history emerged to represent the "ordinary people," often invisible in official records (Mahajan 2011). Historians have traditionally been interested in archiving the accounts provided by the most powerful. Such attitudes led to the destruction of records kept for and by ordinary

people (Thompson 2015). Unlike official records that present ordinary people as "statistical aggregates" (Thompson 2015: 27), oral history accounts focus on particular experiences and subjectivity of individuals (Jayagopalan 2016). For example, whereas official records present the partition of India as a "two-nations, two-communities, two-religions story," oral history narratives brought forth the stories of "dispossession, dislocation, and betrayal" (Jayagopalan 2016:50). Interviews of slaves, which were dismissed by American historians as less reliable than the records kept by slave owners, later transformed people's perception of slavery (Ritchie 2014). Oral history research thus documents regular people's accounts and helps us understand the struggle and resistance of everyday life (Shopes 2014). Not only can they help one make sense of past events, but they can also help understand subgroups' struggles (Ritchie 2014).

This project captures the perception of regular Indian citizens towards CAA and citizenship and tells us how individuals make sense of these events. Like the partition of 1947, this period is crucial to the nation and its people. The CAA introduced a radical change by fast-tracking citizenship based on religious identity. While issues related to the CAA, such as protests, conflicts, riots, and arrests, are reported and recorded by newspapers, investigative journals, and official documents (such as police records), they rarely capture regular people's accounts.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act or the CAA 2019 was enacted in December of 2019. While many considered the Act a much-needed step, others found it unconstitutional, unsecular, and unjust. The Act stated that an individual, who is a national of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan, and belongs to one of the six religious communities—Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Parsi, or Sikh, can apply for naturalized citizenship, given that they migrated to India prior to December 31, 2014. Although the ruling party asserted that the Act would be beneficial for religious minorities facing persecution in these three neighborhood Islamic countries, the explicit exclusion of Muslims from this Act created an uproar which resulted in numerous protests and a riot in north-eastern Delhi. As COVID-19 hit India in 2020 and a lockdown was imposed countrywide, regular ways of life came to a screeching halt, and we set aside the issue of the CAA 2019.

This project investigates how a structural change such as the CAA 2019 interacts with individual perceptions of citizenship and citizen identity. Grounded in Identity Theory and Identity Work, this research argues that a structural change ought to impact how individuals make sense of identities related to that structure. The CAA 2019, I argue, is a structural change and this study is a qualitative investigation of how individuals not only make sense of the CAA, but citizenship and citizen identity. I employed two research questions to guide this project:

1. How are Indian citizens defining citizenship in the context of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 (CAA)?

2. How do Indian citizens make sense of their citizen identity?

I want to include a disclaimer related to the scope of this research. My research does not answer what kind of changes happened in perceptions of citizen identity or citizenship due to the enactment of the CAA 2019. Although previous research informs us that we adjust our self-conceptions in response to structural changes, the scope of this research is beyond measuring such changes. Instead, my research tells us how Indian citizens make sense of the CAA 2019. Additionally, since it is impossible to make sense of the Citizenship Amendment Act without accounting for one's conceptualization of citizenship and citizen identity, this research provides an in-depth understanding of how these individuals make sense of citizenship and their citizen identity.

Thus, while addressing the research questions, I organize the sections on how individuals make sense of the CAA 2019 and citizenship. We know that citizenship

discourse deals with an inherent duality– the issue of inclusion and exclusion. Since citizenship status is linked with resources and opportunities, boundaries are drawn to distinguish insiders from outsiders. My narrators, irrespective of whether they are pro or anti-CAA, speak to this duality. In the next sections, I explore how these narrators make sense of inclusion and exclusion when it comes to Indian citizenship and the CAA. Broadly, I find two main categories of narrators. First, narrators vehemently in support of the CAA 2019 provide varied rationales. While some argue that the CAA 2019 (and the National Register of Citizens or NRC) is a necessary step to ensure national security, and all developed countries have a somewhat comparable act, others bring up India's historical and cultural background and maintain that the CAA 2019 was a justified step. The second category of respondents argues against the Act and refers to it as unconstitutional and unsecular. They also refer to this Act as a polarizing tactic of the Hindutva government and a vehicle for establishing a Hindu nation. The next two sections will unwrap these positions, while simultaneously investigating how individual understanding of the CAA 2019 is informed by one's understanding of citizenship and citizen identity.

"This law is based on a historical event…So, yeah, it makes sense to me"- Making Sense of the CAA 2019, Citizenship, and Citizen Identity from a *Pro-CAA* Standpoint

In this section, I discuss how the narrators who favor the CAA make sense of citizenship, citizen identity, and the CAA 2019. I also analyze how they make sense of the inclusionary and exclusionary elements of the CAA. While analyzing the narratives, I

find that arguments related to inclusion and exclusion flow hand-in-hand. In the following sections, I have dealt with inclusive and exclusive narratives simultaneously. Thus, while reading, the readers must stay aware of such overlaps.

1. Naturalizing the Homeland: Cultural Identity, Cultural Homogeneity, and Differences

Religious Identity as Cultural Identity

I find that the narrators make sense of the exclusion of Muslims by perceiving the cultural identity of India, emphasizing a cultural similarity among its inhabitants, and by accentuating the idea of belongingness. In these arguments, national identity and citizen identity come to be represented as a natural disposition. By conceptualizing a cultural identity of India, rooted in religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, the narrators emphasize prioritizing citizenship on the basis of the cultural homogeneity of people born into one of these religious communities. Thus, religious identity, citizen identity, and national identity often conflate in these arguments. For example, Balakrishna, despite acknowledging that India is a secular nation, argues that historically it has been the land of specific religious communities. He is a young professional in his early thirties and holds an engineering degree. He maintains, "*... so even though India is not that thing, but historically, it's just a fact; India was land of this thing. Other religions came here. Some came with the invasion thing, like Christians and Muslims, the Islamic invaders.*" Thus, Balakrishna distinguishes between the concept of India,

which is contemporary and secular, and an India which existed before modern developments. And that's where we see history meeting romanticism. He argues, *"...they say that the concept of India is only after 1947, which I think it's not. It was a whole civilization before things are there, so if you consider that land mass area, then it was all same people."* Thus, Balakrishna prioritizes this *"historical"* conception of India to make sense of inclusion and exclusion in the CAA. He justifies the inclusion of the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and Parsis in the CAA by arguing that although India may be a secular nation now, originally, it was "*the land of dharmic religions*." By "*dharmic religions,"* he refers to the cluster of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. He argues that people who are persecuted in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, have nowhere else to go except to India, because *"No other country is Hindu or Sikh country in the world...."* He refers to this inclusivity as a "*sentimental thing*." I argue that the idea of 'sentiment' is employed because the narrator identifies certain religious communities as the 'natural' inhabitants of India. Similarly, it is assumed that it must be a natural disposition of a Muslim individual to choose an Islamic nation over India while seeking refuge. Deepak is one such narrator. He has some high school education, and he owns a small business. He argues, *"There are a lot of countries for Muslims, right! There is Pakistan, Istanbul, Turkey, Iran, Iraq—all these are Muslim countries. They can live anywhere (translated from Hindi)."* This presumption, that Muslims can live in any of the Islamic countries, points out that the narrator makes sense of citizen identity in conjunction with a religious or cultural identity. Not only do the narrators employ religion and religious identities as a crucial deciding factor in

navigating the debate around exclusion and inclusion, but the term *culture* is often used synonymously with religion.

Cultural Homogeneity

Several narrators use the notion of *"cultural similarity"* and *"cultural assimilation"* to guide the discussion around exclusion and inclusion. They argue that the issue of assimilation must be considered when addressing asylum or citizenship. Chanchal furnishes a micro-level metaphorical model to explain the macro-level phenomenon such as the CAA. She is in her early thirties, has a master's degree, and has more than eight years of professional experience. She signifies nations with the metaphor of houses and uses the analogy of a maid to represent individuals seeking refuge in India. In her symbolic account, the maid works in one of the three neighboring houses and is unsatisfied with her situation due to a contradiction– religious differences with her employers. So, the maid seeks work in a different house, one that is close to her cultural background. Chanchal continues,

> *"Maybe it's the preparing of the food, the system of food processing or lifestyle or the culture. "Mine is different from theirs, so me putting up with this religion family is not going in a harmonious manner, so can I move into your house for the work because you and I belong to the same religion, and my adaptation of food and all those things is very much similar to yours."*

Chanchal argues that cultural or religious differences ultimately hinder adjustment processes. Her argument implies that the appeal for naturalized citizenship makes sense

when the individual's religion, culture, and lifestyle match that of the nation where they plan to settle. Not only considering a *"*cultural fit,*"* when seeking refuge, is a natural course of action, but when someone ignores it, the case must be considered carefully. She continues with the metaphorical narrative as she discusses the matter of the exclusion of Muslims.

> *"But then suppose a maid, the person who is working in the family of same religion says the same thing, that our cultural things are not matching, being belonging to the same religion, and, "Can I take shelter in your house?" So, won't the very idea come into your mind, why? Like, you both belong to the same culture, and you're feeling unrest over there, and you want to come over here."*

As we unwrap this narrative, we see that Chanchal makes sense of the exclusion of Muslims in the CAA with the premise of the *"cultural misfits."* The CAA mentions three neighborhood Islamic nations- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. While fast-tracking the citizenship process for people who desire Indian citizenship and come from these three countries, the CAA excludes Muslims. Not only does the notion of cultural homogeneity allow her to make sense of the exclusion of Muslims from the CAA but prevents her to conceptualize situations where Muslim nationals of Islamic countries might seek refuge elsewhere. She suspects that a Muslim national may want to leave an Islamic nation due to economic reasons. However, she urges, it is highly unlikely that they would be immigrating to India because, *"There are around 29 countries which are recognized as Islamic countries, and they contributing to 10 percent of, you know, global GDP."* She continues asking, "*Then why not these people would be migrating to these countries? Why India? A country whose GDP contribution is way lesser compared to*

these countries…." A similar argument is raised by Deepak, who says, "*(translated) There are plenty of countries just for Muslims. There is Pakistan, Istanbul, Turkey, Iran. All these are Muslim countries. They can go anywhere."* Another narrator, Balakrishna, supports the CAA by indicating that many countries around the world maintain a religious identity. He says,

> *"If the world was a ideal place, I would have said, yeah, we should. Eh, everyone can go in anywhere and all. But it's just the way of the world right now, which I think we need to be a little practical. There are nations where Christians can go, and there are nations, Islamic nations, where they can go. Even for Buddhists, there are some."*

Balakrishna's argument claims that the exclusionary component of the CAA is a necessity as there is not many countries that Hindus, Jains, or Sikhs can claim as their own. In these accounts, nation and national identity become tangled with cultural identity. Therefore, not only is the exclusion of Muslims from the CAA justified, but an exception is met with suspicion.

A similar argument is drawn with the notion of *"belongingness."* Om argues that the CAA 2019 benefits a specific group of immigrants. Om is in his early thirties, has a master's degree, and identifies as a gay man. He views the CAA as an extension of the post-partition resettlement measure. He says,

> *"Historically, it has been there, because many people who are on the side of Pakistan and Bangladesh who didn't want the partition. They didn't want the partition but they wanted to come. But the situation was such that at the time that*

they could not come. Now, if they think that they should live in the country they think they belong to, so they could come."

As we see, Om emphasizes *"belongingness."* He assumes that individuals who belong to other religions besides Islam may not feel a connection with an Islamic nation. He maintains,

> *"Because, as we know, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh are officially Islamic countries. So if they feel, "Okay, we don't want to live in Islamic country. We want to live in a secular country or we want to go to the place where we can practice our religion freely," they could come."*

Om thus makes sense of inclusion in terms of *"belongingness."* However, his notion of *"belongingness"* is guided by religion as well. Despite acknowledging India as a secular nation, he rationalizes the exclusion of Muslims as neither unsecular nor unconstitutional. Situating his argument in the context of partition allows him to make sense of the exclusion as a fair decision.

Cultural Differences- Questioning the 'belongingness' of Muslims

I find that the narrators continue to emphasize cultural differences between communities while rationalizing the exclusion of Muslims from the CAA. They make sense of the exclusion of Muslims with a threat and security narrative. As the notion of cultural similarity gets precedence in these narratives, the issue of loyalty of culturally different Others is brought up. For example, Shyam, an engineer in his late twenties, argues that the enactment of the CAA makes sense because India was divided into Indian

and Pakistan due to ideological differences as *"certain group of people cannot live with the other people."* While reflecting on the issue of exclusion, Chanchal says, *"Rather than considering it is, you know, dismissing the idea of any immigration of any person belonging to Muslim religion. They have just made laws a little more, you would say, stringent,..."* She, thus, reinterprets the exclusion of Muslims from the CAA as *"*stringency*"* due to cultural differences. Moreover, I find narrators arguing that instead of framing this as an exclusion, we must see it as a non-inclusion. They differentiate between non-inclusion and exclusion by claiming that the CAA is merely making a selective choice– It is not saying an absolute 'no' to anyone; instead, it is making the process of citizenship a bit stringent for specific religious communities. For example, Chanchal urges, "*...you won't be saying that, "No, no, absolutely, you cannot." You're not telling a no. This is what CAA is doing. This is not telling Muslims "No," but they are now questioning them...."* This idea of '*questioning*' comes with a particular reservation. As Chanchal emphasizes 'questioning,' she demarcates the Muslims as different than those included in the CAA. Such distinction implies mistrust towards Muslims.

The argument about cultural differences is even more prominent in the accounts given by some of the other narrators. They argue that although the government never mentioned exclusion explicitly, their intention to draw boundaries is apparent. Om suggests that drawing a boundary is the "*spirit of this law"* because "*...if you take everybody else's name and leave one thing, one person, so it is naturally that if you are not mentioning them, you are not mentioning that Muslim cannot come, but you are mentioning these people can come, so this is a different way of putting thing."* As he continues his argument, he replaces 'them' with first-person plural. He says, "*...I think*

their intention was clear that we don't want more Muslims in the country. This was the spirit of this law, but because of constitutional boundaries, they cannot put that we don't want Muslims or this thing." Om thus urges that the lack of straightforwardness in mentioning exclusion in the Act is a result of strategic planning on the behalf of the government. Nonetheless, he asserts that the decision to exclude Muslims will benefit India. He brings up the notion of "cultural India" to support the making of the boundary. He states,

> *"I'm not defending government or anybody's idea, but I am just defining on the basis of India, that people who are coming, do they believe in the idea of cultural India or not. Do they think they came from Arab and now they are settling here, or do they think they are from India? Now I'm talking about the cultural India."*

The notion of *"cultural India"* not only invokes a concept of India that is significantly different from what the constitution commands but also imagines India as a homogenized Hindu nation. Om's argument implies that the citizens must believe in a *"cultural India"* and share a feeling of belongingness. The *"stringency"* and *"questioning"* appearing in Chanchal's narrative reappears in different forms as Om questions the degree of "belongingness" of Muslims.

I find that the narrators bring up terrorism when discussing the exclusion of Muslims. In his account, Om argues that the decision to exclude Muslims is rational because, "*Do they think that "we are Indian, culturally," or do they think "we are from another world, and now we will capture India."* He continues, "*...Muslims cannot come because of the past experience of the terrorist attacks or many things, that was the simple*

case…And I support this personally." Like Om, Chanchal rationalizes her support for the decision of exclusion, citing the threat of terrorism. She argues that the CAA is a preventive measure and brings up SWOT– a technique used to identify issues, plan strategies, and manage them through proper techniques. According to her, the CAA might be a result of such an analysis where the Muslim community is identified as a threat. She argues,

> *"Weakness is something that you can overcome, and threat is something you have to deal with. You have to have a mitigation plan. You have to have a backup plan for it. So, I think in case of while approaching this CAA thing, our government has looked at this section as an incoming threat and the internally inhibiting one as the weakness, where they can overcome by doing few things, or might be they are also looking at them as a weakness and they do not want to (inaudible) up on the existing issues."*

As we see, not only does Chanchal refer to Muslim immigrants as *an 'incoming threat,'* but refers to Muslim citizens as a *"weakness"* of the country. She argues that Muslims are the main perpetrators of terrorism in today's world. Both Om and Chanchal thus draw the boundaries of citizenship. Referring to Muslim individuals as terrorists is not an uncommon phenomenon. Bilal, who identifies as a Muslim man, expresses his grievance against such *"framing"* and says, *"… people knew that the big, big contribution which of course Muslims have done in this country. But no one now barely cares about it. All they basically about, like yelling on the same nature like every Muslims are terrorists."*

The sense of distrust also comes to forefront as the narrators listen to Amir Aziz's poem (stimulus text) and share their thoughts. The author, Aziz is an anti-CAA activist, and his name communicates a Muslim identity[18]. In his poem, *"I Refuse,"* Aziz not only questions the CAA but declares that he refuses to become a name and exist through a register (referring not only to the CAA but NRC). Narrators who identify themselves as staunch supporters of the CAA, delegitimize Aziz's concerns by referring to the poem as *"anarchist," "anti-establishment,"* or *"hate-speech."* For example, Madhav, a young professional in his mid-twenties, refers to the poem as *"anti-establishment,"* and argues that bigger political powers are at play in this case. Deepak refers to the poem as *hate-speech"* and questions Aziz's intention. Deepak maintains, *"If you are right, I mean, if you are an Indian, a proper Indian, if you have nothing to fear, then why are you refusing?"*

We see the process of drawing boundaries around citizenship entails a complex discourse around culture, identity, threat, and security. In these narratives, we also glimpse a notion of India that is homogenized and Hindu. This conceptualization of India distances itself from the concept of secularity. The idea of *"cultural India"* demands cultural similarity and a shared sense of cultural belongingness, which ultimately motivates demarcating boundaries of citizenship and *Other* Muslims. Once more, I find Chanchal's argument regarding inclusion and exclusion compelling. She says,

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[18] In India, first and last names often indicate a person's religious and caste backgrounds. However, that does not mean that the person practices a certain religion. My name indicates that I am from a Hindu family. While that is true, I do not identify with any religion.

> *"At times, you do not want to exclude a certain person, but you just do not want to include them. And honestly, it happened a lot. There were many people (laughs) who we do not want to -- we never want to include. We could not exclude them, so, like, our circle, we did not include them."*

The CAA thus marks the boundary of this *"circle–"* the in-group or the citizens of the *"cultural India."*

So far, I have discussed how the narrators believe in the existence of a "cultural" India– the homeland of several religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. They make sense of exclusion and inclusion based on the notion of a natural connection between the land and the people who belong to certain religions or cultures. The narrators, therefore, imagine a national as well as a citizen identity emerging from a homeland. They imagine a shared identity and a shared sense of belongingness among people who are identified as natural inhabitants of the land. This notion of belongingness, however, is not attributed to Muslims. A sense of anxiety lingers when it comes to the issue of inclusion of Muslims. In the following section, I discuss how the narrators use the partition of India to make sense of the CAA, exclusion and inclusion, citizen identity, and citizenship politics.

2. Boundaries of the Nation: The Partition of India 1947

I find that the partition is often brought up to make sense of the CAA and its exclusionary component. It would be an oversight to think that the partition of 1947 only

resulted in the formation of the physical boundaries of the nation– the independent and secular India. The partition continues to delineate the symbolic boundaries of India. Although separated by 72 years, the CAA is viewed as a step that mitigates some of the effects of the partition. Whereas the narratives regarding *cultural India* imagine a homeland based on homogenous cultural identity, the partition discourse plays with the anxieties over this imagined homeland. I find, that as a historical event, the issue of partition allows the narrators empirical ground to root their exclusionary argument. The partition of India was enacted in 1947 when the nation won independence from the British empire and established itself as an independent nation. A consequence of the partition was the formation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), India, and Pakistan. The blame for the partition, I find, is often attributed to the Muslim community. Shyam argues that the CAA, "*...basically kind of made sense to me, especially because of the historical reason."* He suggests that the partition is nothing but a 'historical fact,' and Bangladesh and Pakistan, "*...these two countries were created out of India based on certain ideology, that certain group of people cannot live with the other people with who do not belong to that group."* As we see, he brings up the issue of "ideology" or ideological incompatibility between communities to make sense of both the partition, and the exclusion of the Muslims from the CAA. Attributing the blame of the partition to Muslims serves to portray the larger Muslim community as the beholder of certain ideologies that make them 'unfit' to coexist with other communities. We find that Shyam's argument mimics that of Chanchal's, who emphasizes the necessity of a cultural fit. The partition discourse establishes exclusivity, based on cultural identity, as a just measure because partition is viewed as a consequence of cultural incompatibility. Shyam

uses the word "*discount*" to make sense of the issue of the exclusion of Muslims and the inclusion of the rest of the categories. He maintains that people who are included in the Act are basically receiving "*a discount for citizenship*" on '*humanitarian*' as well as '*historical*' grounds because "*people of other faiths who were basically, or essentially stuck there, for they could not move in time to India, let's say. They are being religiously persecuted for decades now, I mean, it's no secret, even secret, the world knows it, the world media knows it."* The "*discount*" marks the symbolic boundary of the homeland– it signals an injustice that came in the guise of the partition. The partition is referenced as a misdeed resulting from the ideological and cultural differences of the Muslims. Viewing the CAA as an offshoot of partition thus helps justify the exclusion of the Muslims, while simultaneously rationalizing the inclusion of the rest of the religious categories as a "*discount*" of citizenship.

The partition narrative establishes the CAA as a necessity. Balakrishna argues that the religious minorities in the neighborhood Islamic nations are '*dwindling*.' He says, "*...there are records actually that around the independence time, the minority population was like around, especially the Hindu population, was around 15% or so, double digits, and now all of them have become single digits."* He sees the CAA as a required step because "*...we always keep on seeing like somebody got converted, or they got killed because they didn't follow the thing that you either convert or die…"* Balakrishna asserts that the CAA is the solution to the problems that religious minorities have been facing in the neighboring nations. He says, "*... you were always like, "Okay, what can even India do for them?" When this CAA thing came, that was like a, "Well, yeah, why not do this?" Because this makes them -- they can come here."*

The question of 'help' however, is also motivated by the notion of cultural identity. On one hand, while discussing the issue of exclusion of Muslims from the CAA and the issue of persecution faced by Muslim minorities in Islamic countries, I find Balakrishna arguing against India playing the role of 'savior god.' On the other hand, while discussing the issue of inclusion, he says, "*India or Bharat is like the land of the dharmic religions, no matter what anyone says. It is just a fact, so like Hindu, Sikh, Jains, and Buddhist. So, it's like, yeah, where else they will go? They are persecuted. No other country is Hindu or Sikh country in the world...*" Thus, we see an exciting play of pull and push as the narrators make sense of the boundaries of citizenship. They employ the notion of cultural proximity to deflect responsibilities toward Muslim individuals. While discussing the issue of the exclusion of Muslims from the CAA, the narrators argue that India should not have to be the one dealing with the issue of providing refuge. Balakrishna asks, *"why the onus comes on India all the time for everything, to be like the savior god and do everything by the best book, which can be (check audio file) about the goodness and all when the game is totally rigged and others are not doing?"* Interestingly, Chanchal, too, expresses a similar concern. She argues that India is always expected to play the philanthropist and praises the current government for taking such a drastic step, such as refusing to include the Muslims in the CAA. She says, *"...for the very first time, Indian government has dropped its sanctimonious or the philanthropist attitude..."* As the notion of cultural identity guides the citizenship discourse, we see a distinction forming in terms of who must be 'helped' with the provision of citizenship. Therefore, when referring to helping persecuted Muslim minorities through the CAA, it is interpreted as 'onus' or 'burden' as opposed to 'responsibility.'

I find that the narrators build an equity-based argument to make sense of exclusion and inclusion. The process includes the partition of 1947 to build a counterargument against the accusation of the CAA being unsecular and unconstitutional. While Shyam refers to the Act as 'a discount,' Om calls it '*positive discrimination.*' Citing reservation policies on the basis of caste, gender, and socio-economic conditions, which operate similarly to affirmative action in the U.S., Om asserts that the Constitution of India itself is not entirely secular. However, he maintains that reservation is a necessary step to reinstate equality. He seems to be making an equity-based argument here. Drawing a parallel to the issue of untouchability, he argues, "*I mean, the untouchability was on the basis of the social criteria, then the solution was also in the social criteria."* He maintains that the Act is neither unsecular nor unconstitutional because *"if the persecution was on the basis of the religion, then the solution should come on the basis of the religion also. This is called the positive discrimination."* A similar argument is found in Madhav's account, who maintains that although the Constitution asserts secularism, it came after the partition. Citing the fact that religion led to the partition, he contends that any measure to bring help to those affected by the partition must be informed by religion. He states,

> "*So, if the creation of the country is based on religion, that was the basis of a partition. And the Constitution was made after that. I'm also a big advocate of not including the religion in any of the government decision making. I will be an advocate of that. But this thing dates way back; before the Constitution was made, the partition of this country. So, this can be an exception for that.*"

Thus, these narrators make sense of the issue of exclusion and inclusion as *'exception'* and '*positive discrimination.*' Drawing citizenship boundaries based on religion is interpreted as a necessary step because the partition happened on the basis of religion. Moreover, Madhav's account not only rationalizes the CAA as a step long overdue, but an essential step for India to reinstate secularism. He acknowledges that unlike Pakistan or Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) India did not have a religious foundation, "*...India wasn't made as a Hindu country. It was made as a secular country*." He argues that "*... all those people who were not accepted by the newly created Islamic state, fundamentally and ideologically became the part of the secular part of the country.*" According to him, the CAA provides relief for those people who could not come to India during the partition and faced persecution. He argues that these people, "... w*ho faced persecution and had to return back to India, didn't have any official acceptance from Indian State. Even though we call ourselves a secular state. So, this bill gave that identification from the state....*" He implies that it is not enough to call a nation 'secular,' it must act in a certain way to prove it. Acknowledging the people who want to "return back" to India is one of the ways to reinstate secularism. Thus, Madhav's narrative rationalizes the CAA as a secular step that should have been taken long back.

In summary, in this section I discuss how the narrators favoring the CAA make sense of the Act, citizenship, citizen identity, and negotiate the duality of inclusion and exclusion. The narrators employ two interconnecting narratives to support the decision of the government to include six religious communities while excluding the Muslims. First, they emphasize a 'cultural India.' This is a majoritarian argument that imagines a homeland rooted in cultural identity. This argument favors cultural homogeneity and

questions the belongingness of Muslim individuals due to cultural differences. Second, the CAA is viewed as a late but necessary consequence of the partition of 1947. I find that the partition of India continues to mark the boundaries of the nation and citizenship. With the Contextualization of the CAA in terms of the partition, the narrators rationalize the Act as fair and beneficial. The contextualization allows distinction between the 'responsibilities' and the 'burdens' of the nation. Therefore, we see the formation of the limits of the nation-- marking who deserves inclusion and who does not.

Fracturing the Nation: Making Sense of the CAA 2019, Citizenship, and Citizen Identity from an Anti-CAA 2019 Standpoint

In this section, I discuss how individuals who oppose the CAA 2019, or some of its elements, make sense of this Act, citizenship, and citizen identity. Here, we find an exciting mix of people. Some narrators do not trust the Act and express suspicion about its real intentions. In addition, we find those who extend partial support to the Act. However, a core component of these narratives is a sense of distrust toward the Act and the BJP government. Like the previous section, I find that the narrators argue along the lines of inclusion and exclusion. However, unlike the previous section, where the pro-CAA narrators primarily lean toward rationalizing the exclusion, I find an overwhelming number of narratives supporting inclusion. The idea of inclusion, however, is less straightforward. The argument about inclusivity peeks through as the narrators refer to the CAA as a vehicle of polarization, divide-and-rule politics, and conducive to

uncertainty. These accounts give us a glimpse of India, which is secular and stands against majoritarian identity politics. Several key arguments become prominent in these accounts. First, the narrators assert that the CAA polarizes the nation. Second, they express suspicion toward the Act and hold the BJP government responsible for inducing chaos and uncertainty. Last, I find that although the anti-CAA narrators are primarily inclined toward inclusivity, it is not without a limit.

1. Fracturing the Nation

Polarization

I sense a lack of comfort as the narrators discuss the danger of letting religion be the guiding principle in citizenship politics. They argue that prioritizing certain religions over others in a country as diverse as India can lead to chaos. Rajneesh is in his mid-twenties and has a master's degree. He thinks of India as a congregation of several small countries. He contends, *"...just don't mess with the religions. Because India, if you roam around India you understand (that) it's way too diverse a country. It's not supposed to be a country, It's supposed to be a kingdom, like little, little kingdom all around."* Rajneesh is not only aware of the diverse cultures, but the volatility of the situation. He says, *"...the more I travel in India, the more I understand (that) it's lot of countries inside. And as soon as you touch religion aspect of it, you are talking about, like major, major chaos which can happen."* He fears that the social fabric that keeps India together is quite fragile, and intentional polarization in the name of religion can lead to a significant

rupture beyond repair. In his account, we find a different conceptualization of India– one that is diverse but also volatile due to its diversity.

The narrators argue that the CAA relies on '*oversimplified*' assumptions, which may result in polarization. They maintain that using religious identity as a yardstick for citizenship can lead to biases, prejudices, and hyper-visibility of certain religious communities. They also argue that such overemphasis on religious identity ultimately leads to expanding existing fault lines amongst religious communities. I find Rajneesh arguing that such actions prevent us from seeing individuals as ever-evolving organisms. He maintains that an individual is more than their name, attire, or religious identity "*...because an individual is ever evolving."* He brings his example to bolster this point. A few years before this interview, he became a Buddhist. He says,

> *"…I was something, then I become something, even in religious terms, but at the same time I told you about other things which were happening. So, it's a constantly evolving organism, that is who we are actually. We are not static, we are not, we are not that simple to just categorize in one category. So, this oversimplification is what is killing the entire world right now."*

He continues emphasizing the way of non-duality. As we see here, he believes that an individual's identity, including their religious identity, is a constantly evolving phenomenon. Thus, he asserts that categorizing people based on religious identity only leads to reductionism and polarization. Bilal, too, holds a similar opinion. He discusses his experience with the CAA as a Muslim-identified person. Amidst the chaos initiated by the Act, Bilal realizes that while most of his friends opposed the Act, some supported

it. He recalls his discontent and says, "*...this is ridiculous Act for me. You know, something which discriminates, something which basically makes a bold line, not a fine line between different religious perspective..."* His account brings out the pain as he sensed mistrust hurled at the Muslim community. Despite the contributions of the Muslims to India, Bilal argues, no one cares to think before treating Muslim individuals "*...like every Muslims are terrorists."* He expresses concern at the current situation, where people openly *"...text on comment section that Muslims should be discarded from this country, they are disgrace to the country, they are like, unreliable people, they are terrorists and stuff."* Bilal, in his account, shows resentment toward the Act. He notes that the exclusion of Muslims from this Act leads to grievance among the Muslim population and polarizes the communities in the name of religion.

The sense of polarization is a shared experience among the narrators. Ayan, who is in his late twenties and pursuing higher education in political science, discusses how the IT (information technology) cell of the BJP moves the public discussion in favor of the government. He brings up the dialogues he exchanged with his pro-CAA friends. He says, "*So, at that time when CAA was implemented, majority of my friends were thinking that, "It is good for our Hindu brothers who are suffering in countries which are dominated by Muslims. So, they should have a fair chance of linking back to India.""* Ayan then responds, saying, ""*Why only for the Hindus, or the Jains or the Buddhist, why not all the other suppressed minorities? Even they may include the Muslims.""* Ayan has been quite clear about his position regarding the Act– that he cannot support it as long as it discriminates. Hence, he offers the solution of mentioning all "*suppressed minorities*."

However, he says, his friends "*couldn't just digest*" his question. He implies that his friends' disagreement might result from the propaganda crafted by BJP's IT cell.

I find narrators arguing that prioritizing citizenship based on one's religious identity is a shrewd tactic informed by divide-and-rule politics. These narrators suggest that BJP implements a polarizing tactic to promote the Hindutva agenda. Many even refer to such tactics as archaic and unproductive for development. In his speech, delivered soon after the enactment of the CAA, Prime Minister Modi claims "*Vividhta me Ekta*" or "*Unity in Diversity*" as one of India's main characteristics. While responding to this speech, Sunanda, an engineer and a young professional in her early thirties, asks, *"...then why are you kind of enraging one religion against another because that's not at all promoting unity at all."* Pointing out that enmity between communities and riots only affects ordinary people and never touches the politicians, Sunanda maintains that the BJP government is playing the same game that the British played in the pre-independence era– "*divide and conquer.*" She asserts that when the citizens are "*...united, they have the strength to fight.*" Therefore, the British "*...divided the different communities and religion and then they tried to conquer every state separately....*" It is compelling to see Sunanda drawing a parallel between the pre-independence colonial regime and the BJP governance. Another narrator, Abhishek, argues that the Act will ultimately be counterproductive. Abhishek is completing a master's degree and in his late-twenties. He expresses concern regarding the CAA and warns against believing the promises made by the politicians. He says, "*...I am seeing that when they speak, they are implementing 'divide and rule.' As long as this 'divide and rule' exists, nothing is possible.*" He continues, "*Can you tell why we see so much development in countries like USA, Europe,*

Singapore, Japan? The contemporary period is the era of postmodernism. At this period, can you tell me which country relies on religion for development? It's not possible." These narratives reflect a resentment toward the government as it plays identity politics instead of focusing on issues that bring development, such as education or unemployment.

Several narrators refer to the CAA as unconstitutional. They maintain that the Act violates the equality agreement by prioritizing specific communities based on religion. Rajashri is in her early thirties, identifies as an LGBTQI+ person, and an activist. According to her, CAA "*...violates some of the constitutional elements because India is a secular state. And when you're in a secular state if you're granted citizenship on the basis of religion, that means you have a state religion."* She maintains that CAA is frightening as *"it is definitely in conflict with the Constitution itself."* Manik, who is in his late sixties and came to India right before the formation of Bangladesh, argues that although the term 'secular' is a later addition, the constitution of India has always carried the essence of secularism. He says, "*reading the constitution makes it clear that the constitution already had everything which were required to treat each and every religion equally—every person has freedom to follow their religion, no one should be hateful to another religion, no one could slander another religion these were already in the constitution*." He points out that like Hindus, who are divided into castes, sub-castes, sects, and sub-sects, Muslims too are divided into categories. They occupy different socio-economic strata and *"...one sect can be abused by another."* He resents that "*...the Act did not keep any opportunity or scope for them."* To these narrators, secular refers to equal standing and opportunity for all, irrespective of religion or other social identity

markers. I find them pointing out the problematic understanding of 'Muslim' as a homogenous group of people and arguing that such over simplistic perceptions can lead to the victimization of the most vulnerable.

In these narratives, we also glimpse an India that believes in pluralism. In a country like India, where over a billion people follow several different religions and are divided into thousands of castes, sub-castes, sects, and sub-sects, some argue that it is better to keep religion out of political decision-making processes. Rajneesh says, *"Don't mention religion anywhere because in India is a secular country. Let it be there. Soon as you mention anything, so you will be prioritizing some over other. And India is not about that."* Religion has always been a sensitive topic in India and an issue of contention. In pre-independence India, the religious discord between Hindus and Muslims not only resulted in the partition of the country but killings and displacement of millions of people. Rajneesh refers to the current situation, a consequence of *"new age politics,"* which is played with data floating around the internet. He argues that he has *"never seen India as polar"* as the time when the CAA was enacted. He says, "*...if the foundations are getting shaken, if this active ruling body is trying to scratch that side of it, then it's something to worry about. It's a lot to worry about, actually."*

Suspicion- Against the CAA and the Government

Narrators argue that the non-inclusion of Muslims in the CAA 2019 sets the boundary between citizens and non-citizens. Such exclusion also informs us about the nature of the nation-state. These narrators discuss how the CAA marks the nascent of the

Hindu nation. Rajashri thinks that not including Muslims in the CAA is a cunning strategy that implicitly communicates the Hindutva agenda. She argues that providing citizenship based on religion is nothing but a tactic to announce a state religion. She draws our attention to the wording of the Act, saying,

> "*The first problem, of course, is the fact that it does not include Muslims in its wording itself. That essentially lets people to believe that, "We cannot accept Muslims, because India is a Hindu nation. That is why we're accepting only Hindus." It is implicitly implied, when we are only accepting people, giving people citizenship on the basis of religion. We are implying that this is the religion of the state. We need not express it implicitly, we need not write it in the constitution, but that is what the wording of the law would imply. So, it is massively discriminatory, one. And secondly, when combined with the NRC, it leads to a hugely discriminatory process.*"

Here, Rajashri's argument resembles that of Om's. While discussing the CAA, Om, a CAA supporter, maintains that the word 'exclusion' could not be explicit in the Act because the constitution of India forbids anything but secularism. Nonetheless, he claims that the "*spirit of the law*" is the exclusion of Muslims. Despite holding oppositional views, we see that these two narrators came to a similar conclusion. However, whereas Om does not view the Act as unconstitutional or unsecular, Rajashri's view differs.

The narrators continue to question the intention of the CAA and the government. In the speech, the Prime Minister refers to the accusation of the CAA affecting the Muslim citizens of India as a "*white lie*." Sunanda, however, finds dual meaning in

Modi's speech. She argues that his claim, *"The Muslims are not going to be affected,"* could mean that he does not consider Muslims a "*matter of concern."* She thinks it is possible that what Modi meant was, "*This doesn't concern you, because anyways we're making others' life easier, your life will stay as it is.""* Tanmay, who is in his mid-twenties and finishing his master's degree, too, expresses a similar sentiment when he says, *"it is possible that the Prime Minister is not referring to the Muslim citizens when he mentions 'Indian citizen.' If that's the case, it's wrong."* Despite the Act being inclusive of the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Christians, and Parsis, the narrators seem to struggle to trust its intentions or that of the BJP government. Ambika, who is in her late twenties, an IT professional, and a part of LGBTQI+ community, says, "*A time will come when it will be your turn…today they are asking for your help against the Muslims. Tomorrow they will be against you."* Unlike Ambika, Baisakhi does not think she has anything to fear from the Act. Baisakhi is in her mid-twenties and has a master's degree. She argues that as a Hindu, upper-caste, middle-class, highly educated woman, not only does she not need be afraid of the Act, but she can openly be critical of it. However, she thinks that the Act is highly discriminatory and can cause chaos as some people might feel, *""...they may come for me tomorrow, and they may say, 'You are not an Indian'.""* A sentiment, Bilal, as a Muslim identified person, shares. He argues that the Act plays a politics of identity which not only discriminates but makes people *"quite conscious about our, you know, survival…. now it's a question about our existence."*

I find several narrators accusing the government of lack of transparency. They argue that the chaos could have been controlled if the government had been more open about the Act and its intentions. For example, Baisakhi calls the government a *"big*

letdown" as they failed to *"... communicate with the people properly...."* Referring to the speech delivered by the Prime Minister, she says, *"...if I look at Narendra Modi's statement, and he says unity in diversity, and he truly means it, he would have probably made more efforts to communicate with the people. I mean, there are more means to communicate today than there ever have."* She thinks that the Prime Minister chose to *"remain ambiguous because it suits his political interests...."* Although Baisakhi never mentions it clearly, she seems to imply that the lack of transparency serves certain political interests. Sunanda says, *"...maybe government has nice motives, how do I know?"* As we see here, the narrators refuse to believe that the government could not be more transparent about the whole issue. We find a sense of frustration boiling against the government in these narratives. As citizens, these narrators feel that the government is failing them. Sunanda is one of those few narrators who looked closely at the anxiety brought by this Act as one of her parents came to India from East Pakistan. As she transforms her thoughts into words, she emphasizes transparency. She says, "*So, I believe, if government brings in more transparency to it, because I have seen, like, for my parents, they have so many questions and I'm sure the other citizens as well have so many questions, they are not clear about them."* She accuses the government of being distant from the reality that people are facing. She says that the uncertainty and chaos "*...actually causes the government to be too far from the people, like, we don't feel the government to be too close to us now."* She asserts that the government must attempt to understand "*... people's opinion, people's emotions, and feelings, so the government should actually come closer, bringing more transparency, be open to answer to the various questions and concerns the people have.*"

The narrators also think that the lack of transparency regarding the implementation of the CAA resulted in uncertainty. Manik argues that the government must not remain silent about the implementation process. *He says, "...Now the Citizenship Act is saying that Hindus, Jains, Buddhists will receive citizenship. What do they have to do? How do they say? They cant just say it. There must be some kind of documentation."* He says staying quiet about the process only leads to uncertainty *"...because there is no rule yet."* He maintains that people will believe whatever they want until the government becomes transparent about it, leading to more chaos. Baisakhi shares his feelings and says, "*You know, I have also heard this from my friends that, "is this for everyone, or is this just for those people?" Are they going to apply this in Bengal only or are they going to implement in Delhi as well?"* The questions keep piling up as they remain unanswered. Baisakhi echoes the thought of many others, "*it's very unclear what the real picture is."* Rajashri thinks that things will get even more convoluted from an administrative standpoint. She voices the question,

> "*how would you, first, how would you define persecution? Secondly, how would you identify those people who are undergoing persecution? Third, how would you look at, how would you designate the persecution? Like nobody will have a letter or recommendation thing, "I have undergone persecution." Right? So, how would you identify that? Would you identify it by the violence? How are you going to confirm that?*"

Rajashri's account reflects a deep mistrust toward the government. She does not hesitate to express her lack of trust and argues that the government never needs to answer these

questions because their intention could differ from their claims. She brings up the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and asserts that the goal of the CAA might be granting citizenship to those who have been excluded from the NRC list, provided that they are not Muslims. The NRC was enacted in Assam in the 1970s. Assam shares a border with Bangladesh and, as a result, experiences a high level of immigration. NRC was introduced as a measure to control illegal immigration. Nonetheless, in 2019, when the government updated the register, 1.9 million people were excluded and marked as D-voters or Doubtful Voters. This exclusion from the NRC list is viewed as a fiasco that only the government must be blamed. She says,

> "*...the intent is to grant citizenship on a massive scale, that would mean that if anybody has been left out of the NRC, that would mean that they become designated foreigners, if they are designated foreigners and they are Hindus, they are persecuted, so that would mean they would come back into the country. That is one way of looking at it. So, which would mean, it would mean, the Muslims out. Because Muslims are not, the so called 'natural descendants of this country anyway.' I mean that's the viewpoint we're discovering.*"

Rajashri is not the only narrator who thinks that the CAA was enacted so that it could be paired up with the NRC and repair the blunder. Neither is she the only one to argue that when paired up, the non-Muslim individuals will have an added advantage due to the CAA and will be re-included as citizens.

By criticizing polarization, oversimplifying categorization, and identity politics, the narrators, build an inclusive argument. Through their dissent from the CAA, they

stand for inclusivity. Hence, Brinda considers the Act highly discriminatory despite not opposing the CAA. Brinda is in her early-thirties and has a master's degree. She argues that complete opposition cannot bring a beneficial solution. She sees possibilities in this Act and argues that the Act can be beneficial if it is mended to be inclusive. She criticizes it for being exclusive toward Muslims and excluding other countries besides Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Brinda argues that she thinks of India as a nation that continuously extends help to those who need it. She says,

> "*So, if you're making a law to help people, you make sure that you include everyone, as simple as that. A normal person who does not understand the legality, language, legal language of any law, will understand this much that if you're extending a hand, you hand it to anyone. If someone is there in your house hungry, and if you're going to, you don't choose the beggar you give money to, you either give or you don't give, is as simple as that.*"

The argument about inclusivity cannot get more authentic than this statement. With that, we now move to the next sub-section where we will see how, despite opposing the CAA, the narrators manage to retain the boundaries of citizenship.

2. Borderlands of Citizenship: The CAA, the Citizens, and the Dilemma

Citizenship, being an inherently exclusive concept, must sustain its boundaries. The boundary may move– it can expand or shrink but cannot be undone. Despite being in opposition and arguing for inclusion, the anti-CAA narrators do not dismantle the

boundary between the citizens and the non-citizens. Instead, in their narrative, I find evidence supporting its expansion. In this section, I show how the anti-CAA narrators demarcate the limits of Indian citizenship. I find that they question the viability of the CAA, citing the issue of exploding population, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure. Interestingly, although these narrators criticize the CAA for excluding Muslims, they emphasize drawing a boundary to curb the entry of the "*outsiders.*" While the pro-CAA narrators primarily refer to the Muslims as the "*outsiders*," in the accounts of the anti-CAA narrators, the "*outsiders*" are not defined by any particular social identities.

Despite criticizing the CAA for being unsecular, unjust, and unconstitutional, most anti-CAA narrators challenge its viability. Some argue that the Act is not feasible because India is experiencing a population explosion and lacks necessary resources such as education or employment. In contrast, others think it is only a sham to distract the citizens from the real issues. For example, regarding accommodating new citizens, Ambika asks, "*...how would that be possible when we already are dealing with such a huge population."* Priyanshu frames his argument using the terms "*insiders*" and "*outsiders*." Priyanshu is in his late twnties and has two bachelor's degrees. He is also an LGBTQI+ activist. He insists that people living in India for a long time must receive their citizenship, but measures must be taken to prevent outsiders from entering and receiving citizenship. He expresses his concern regarding the economy and unemployment. He also thinks that rising unemployment can lead to anti-social activities. He says,

> "*Because population density has risen extremely here. We know that very well. And the economic infrastructure is an extremely bad shape. So, at this moment, if*

> *outsiders come and crowd this place, unemployment will rise even more. Employment situation is dire in India. You know that. Unemployment will increase, and anti-social activities will increase as well. To restrict all this, we can adopt a policy so that no outsiders can come and crowd this place. That's important.*"

As we see here, the boundaries of citizenship are clearly demarcated. As I mentioned earlier, since citizenship dictates the allotment of resources, individuals try to sustain its exclusivity. The insiders or citizens are rightful beneficiaries of resources such as employment or education, while the outsiders only create a "*crowd.*" Thus, although Priyanshu supports allotting citizenship to those living in India for a long time, he insists on restrictive measures to limit accessibility.

The narrators argue that the government must prioritize the needs of the citizens before helping others. Again, they mention resources and internal problems such as population growth and lack of infrastructure. Bilal argues that the Act is unsustainable. He asks, "*... they're not even able to generate general job for general students, how they will be able to generate those jobs? How the medical facilities will be provided? And what are their bare sources?"* Tanmay echoes Bilal's concern, "*See, India is a country that has been hit hard in terms of population. This (Act) cannot be fruitful as we are already suffering from chronic unemployment issue. Besides that, we have problems in the health care. We have internal issues like riots between communities."* These narrators indicate that the government has bitten off more than it can chew regarding this Act. Abhishek calls the CAA "*a gimmick.*" He asserts that the Act does not help anyone but

the BJP. He says, "*The one thing happening is the growth of vote bank. That's surely happening.*" Abhishek asks why the government shows concern for people of other countries when the citizens are suffering. He continues,

> "*Now, where India has its own citizens and the country lacks the opportunity for employment for these people, we are trying to bring more people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and provide them citizenship. What's the benefit here? What would happen to us? I mean, what would happen to them even? We are not gaining anything from this.*"

As we see here, not only are the narrators expressing disquiet toward the Act but express concern regarding its consequences on the current citizens.

I also find some of the narrators making paradoxical arguments. For example, Tanmay thinks that the CAA will adversely impact the country's diversity. He says, "*...we have a lot of diversity in this country, but what we need is a system to maintain this diversity. In that case, bringing more people from outside is not going to help.*" Here we see a different spin on the notion of diversity than in the preceding section, where the narrators suggest that playing citizenship politics based on religious identity can harm the country's social fabric. They argue that playing the game of identity politics in a nation as diverse as India can result in the slashing of cordial ties among communities and lead to terrible chaos. Tanmay's argument, however, suggests that what India needs is a system to maintain its existing diversity; he is apprehensive of introducing a more diverse population through the CAA. I find his argument curious and wonder whether the diversity of a nation can be destroyed due to an influx of diverse populations. I argue that

Tanmay's argument seems contradictory only until we consider it as a process of building boundaries. His argument allows us to locate the borders of Indian citizenship.

I also find narrators arguing that the government employed the CAA to divert citizens' attention from the real issues– unemployment, inflation, and a stagnant economy. As Ayan says, "*...I realized that it is a policy, but the real motive of the current government is to distract the people from the local issues like the unemployment. First and foremost problem for India is unemployment."* He thinks that with the CAA,

> *"...BJP has played it's trump card to distract all the peoples. And we all know that BJP is a pro-Hindu government, pro-Hindu party. So, they want to show that, "We are very much concerned for the Hindu population, not only in India, but in the entire world all over the world.""*

These arguments reflect concerns about the allocation of resources. We find evidence in Abhishek's remarks when he says, "*We are not gaining anything from this."* We find the evidence when Priyanshu demands a policy so that "*no outsiders can come and crowd this place."* These statements are fundamental to sustaining the boundaries of citizenship. Thus, this section teaches a lesson on the limits of citizenship. A dual relationship informs our conception of citizenship. Therefore, these narrators, despite criticizing the CAA for being exclusive to Muslims, could not escape exclusivity. The discourse of citizenship, emerging from their narratives, expands the boundaries of Indian citizenship to some extent but does not dismantle it.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The CAA 2019, which was enacted by the Indian government in December 2019, motivates this study. I argue that the CAA introduces a structural shift in the citizenship structure of India. As a social psychologist, I am intrigued by the concurrent constitution of society and self. I started this project with two objectives. First, I intended to investigate how the structural changes are reflected in the process of making sense of citizen-self. This objective motivated me to investigate the micro-level processes through which we make sense of the self and the social world. The investigation also helped me to understand how we make sense of the Other. Second, I wanted to analyze how Indian citizens make sense of the CAA and citizenship. I chose the Structural Symbolic Interactionist framework to guide my inquiry.

Using Structural Symbolic Interactionism (SSI) allows me to develop a bridge

between the macro-level forces (structure) and micro-level processes (citizen-self) of citizenship. SSI emphasizes structures as a causal priori or independent variable for self (Kuhn 1964; Kuhn and McPartland 1954; Stets and Serpe 2013; Stryker 1957, 1968, 1964, 1977, 1980; Turner, 1962). Unlike traditional symbolic interactionism, which identifies self and society as continuously evolving and argues against the predictability of either (Blumer 1966), SSI perceives social interactions as patterned phenomena grounded in societal structures. SSI, thus, not only maintains that social interactions are more-or-less stable (pattern can only emerge through stability), but this stability emerges from the stability of the structures (Kuhn 1964; Stryker 1980, 1983, 1987, Stryker, Serpe, and Hunt 2005). Using the structuralist tradition, I argue that the citizen-self manifests the structure of citizenship. Although, unlike most Structural Symbolic Interactionists, I decided to rely on qualitative design for conceptual alignment, we can think of structure as an independent variable which determines the outcome of the dependent variable—the citizen identity or the citizen-self. This study shows that in order to make sense of their identity as citizens (citizen-self), individuals engage in an in-depth interaction with the structure—exemplifying the necessity of making sense of the structure in order to make sense of our identity as citizens. To investigate the citizen-self, I adopt the works of citizenship scholars who identify citizenship as a process (e.g., Turner 1997, 2001, 2016). I have also adopted identity theories (Burke 2004; Burke and Reitzes 1991; Burke and Stets 1999; Stets and Burke 2014; Stryker 1980, 2008; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker and Serpe 1982) to guide the investigation into the micro-level, dynamic processes of citizenship. Using SSI creates the opportunity to traverse disciplinary boundaries. This project offers a blueprint to study citizenship in a holistic sense—both as a micro-level

process and a macro-level structure. Using SSI helps capture the exchanges between the structure and the self and the nuanced complexities of the process.

Studying the CAA and the accompanying shift in the Indian citizenship structure gives critical insight into the role of structures in defining citizenship or self as a citizen. The later tradition of SSI, which came to be known as behavioral sociology and focused on identities and roles, argues that meanings or definitions are associated with structures (Stryker 1980, 1983, 1987). To navigate the social world, individuals must make sense of (define) their role identities. Stryker (1983) notes that "all social structures impose some limits on the definitions called into play and the possibilities of interaction as well, by bringing only certain people together in certain places at certain times under certain conditions" (p. 209). Stryker's (1983) argument has been motivated by interactional conditions (people coming together under certain conditions).

My project did not study interactions, however. Instead, I analyzed how each individual draws definitions of citizenship and citizen-self from overlapping structures of society. Findings reflect how structure enables or restricts an individual's access to definitions. I find that access to definitions is determined by one's location within the web of structures. For example, a middle-class Hindu woman can access specific definitions to establish her claim as an Indian citizen. However, that same set of definitions may or may not be accessible to another middle-class Hindu individual who identifies as a transgender woman. Moreover, structural shifts like the CAA can enable particular meanings while forcing others to take a backseat. Since meanings or definitions are largely connected to societal structures, prioritizing specific structures can make

certain definitions more viable. Thus, in the case of the CAA, we see individuals overwhelmingly deploying definitions connected to religious or secular ideologies.

The Structural Side: Multi-layered and with Differential Degree of Stability

A key contribution of this project is that it sheds light on the multi-dimensionality of structures. This study also shows that each of these layers has varied degrees of stability. Although citizenship is a single structure, we must conceptualize it as constituted of multiple layers or dimensions. No structure can operate in a vacuum. Citizenship, as a structure, operates in relation to other structures. Hence, we can establish citizenship claims based on, for example, ethnic identity or language proficiency. These layers are not static. As we see in the case of Indian citizenship, the CAA brought religious identity to the forefront and religion became an important dimension of citizenship discourse. Over time, if religion becomes one of the main criteria of Indian citizenship, it will also become one of the stable layers.

The multi-dimensionality of citizenship is not a novel idea. Yuval-Davis (1991, 1997, 1999) argues that citizenship is a multi-layer concept, and citizen membership operates at local, national, state, ethnic, and supra-state levels. Several scholars have drawn attention to how citizenship is socially constructed and how it emphasizes cultural hegemony. For example, Richardson's (1998, 2000) work focuses on sexual citizenship and analyzes how heterosexuality is included as a necessary ground for citizenship. Meekosha and Dowse (1997) argue that not only does citizenship politics emphasize "hegemonic normalcy" and exclude disabled bodies, but even the feminist literature often

excludes the issue of disability from the discourse of citizenship (Meekosha and Dowse 1997: 49). Cheesman (2017) shows how the idea of a national race came to identify and categorize the Rohingyas as non-citizens in Myanmar. Kipgen (2019) argues that in the case of the Rohingyas, ethnic identity became a key ground on the basis of which the Myanmar government denied citizenship to the Rohingyas.

My study, however, is novel in its endeavor to make sense of these layers or dimensions in a structural sense. This project allows us to create a conceptual model to make sense of these layers. I argue that we must think of citizenship layers as fields where citizenship interacts with other structures of society such as ethnicity, gender, race, or religion.

Citizenship is characterized by an inherent dualism which is also the most stable dimension of citizenship: inclusion/exclusion. Citizenship features include inclusive membership as well as exclusive boundary-making mechanisms. The pro-CAA narrators advocate fast-tracking citizenship by prioritizing religious identity. These narrators argue that such measures will help mitigate some of the adverse impacts the selected religious communities faced post-partition. They also justify the exclusion of Muslims, citing the partition of 1947. Interestingly, while the anti-CAA narrators proclaim their opposition toward the CAA and advocate upholding the Indian constitution and secular values, they simultaneously highlight the importance of maintaining a boundary of Indian citizenship. These narrators often cite a lack of infrastructure, population explosion, and rising unemployment to justify their position. I argue that this inherent dualism—the need to create an inclusive citizen category as well as the necessity of maintaining an exclusive

boundary, is the core layer of the citizenship structure and the most stable component of citizenship. No matter how authentic a person is in their argument for an inclusive structure, they remain committed to maintaining a boundary of citizenship. Our definition of citizenship cannot transcend this duality.

The symbolic boundary of citizenship is determined and maintained by the layers of citizenship. If we visualize dualism at the core of citizenship, we can think of less stable dimensions or the layers as the outer sections. These layers dictate the shifting boundaries of citizenship—the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. As mentioned earlier, the meanings of citizenship are not constructed in a vacuum; they are informed by other structural components. If we take the example of the CAA, we see that the structural shift happened due to an interaction between citizenship and a specific religio-political ideology. When discussing the CAA and citizenship, I find narrators overwhelmingly emphasizing religious and secular identities. Although my findings are not a generalizable reflection of a non-regulated social setting, I argue that the CAA helps bring stability to the layers where citizenship interacts with religious and secular ideologies. In other words, citizenship claims established on religious identity will be perceived as a stronger moral claim by the larger society. However, CAA did not just introduce a boundary by not including the Muslims; it created a prominent fault line. Therefore, Muslims as a non-inclusive category will not be able to establish such citizenship claims.

While religion can play a strong role in establishing moral claims over citizenship due to a structural shift, we must not forget that society is constituted through a web of

structures, and changes in one of the layers can cause a ripple effect. Therefore, even in the included category, not all citizenship claims will find equal support. The anti-CAA narrators repeatedly brought up their fear regarding steps the government might take against minority populations[19] such as LGBTQ+ or Dalit communities. Simultaneously, we find that although Christians and Parsis are inclusive category (included in the CAA along with Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs), the pro-CAA narrators maintain a silence about these categories. These narrators emphasize a cultural connection between India and Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains. They do not try to justify the inclusion of Christians or Parsis with any rationale. Thus, while citizenship claims based on religious identity may seem like an emerging prospect, such claims reflect hegemonic ideologies. To understand such occurrences of selective exclusion or differential treatment, we must also consider other layers of citizenship because inclusion and exclusion are dictated by a myriad of structural interactions. Therefore, although selected religious identities have become more critical in the citizenship discourse and the micro-level processes of meaning-making, we must remain critical of the apparent changes and focus on changes in other layers of citizenship.

Micro-Level Processes of Citizenship: Claims-making, Definitions, and Symbols

Definitions play a key role in establishing citizenship claims. These definitions emerge from the layers of citizenship**.** I noted earlier that citizenship structure interacts

[19] For example, several narrators mention section 377 which was overturned in 2018. Section 377 prohibited same-sex relationships. The narrators fear that the progress made after years of activism will recede.

with other societal structures and these interactions constitute the outer layers of citizenship. These layers are responsible for shifting boundaries of citizenship. Some structures such as ethnic or religious identity can become more involved with citizenship, thus, causing extensive impact on how we experience citizenship. During these interactions, specific definitions become available. For example, if the citizenship law prioritizes specific ethnic identities, due to this structural interaction between ethnicity and citizenship, definitions will become available which can then be deployed to make citizenship claims. We find that pro-CAA citizens make sense of Indian citizenship in terms of selected religious identities (e.g., Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, or Sikhs). They justify prioritizing selected religious identities in citizenship processes and emphasize a natural connection between these identities and the landmass. The CAA played a crucial role in making religion a highly significant structure in relation to citizenship. I am not suggesting that such definitions are strictly a post-CAA phenomenon because we know that the Hindutva movement has been promoting such rationales for decades. However, we also know that the Hindutva movement categorizes Muslims and Christians as outsiders. Interestingly, the narrators, especially pro-CAA narrators, overwhelmingly focus on Muslims as the out-group. Not only do these narrators identify Muslims as outsiders but as people who are non-compatible and non-compliant with the culture of the land. Why did only Muslim identity become the target of these narratives? Why did these narrators overlook the Christian identity? To explain this phenomenon, I draw attention to the link between the structure and the definition. Excluding Muslims from the CAA created the opportunity where one definition is to be prioritized over another. Due to the CAA, Muslims could easily be framed as an out-group. Simultaneously, including the

Christian identity in the CAA did not create that opportunity to define the Christians as the out-group. Interestingly, neither the Christian nor Parsi identity received attention in these narratives. Moreover, although Christians and Parsis are included in the category, this inclusion does not mean making citizenship claims based on Christian or Parsi identity positions. The discursive process around the CAA and citizenship is overwhelmingly focused on Hindu identity.

Although definitions become available due to structural interactions, access to these definitions are not equally distributed. Access depends on one's structural location. Despite enjoying citizenship membership, two individuals may or may not have access to the same definition. Moreover, even when individuals can access a definition, they may or may not employ it. Citizenship claims are produced discursively. Individuals manipulate the definitions and symbols available to them to establish claims. As we see in the case of pro-CAA narrators, they define India as an origin land or true homeland of Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. This definition is accessible to them due to their religious identity markers. As Hindus, this definition allows them to establish their claims over the nation-state. Christians, Muslims, or Parsis cannot access this definition to establish their claims. On the other hand, anti-CAA narrators, despite identifying as Hindus, distance themselves from such claims.

Definitions are tied to cultural symbols. Symbols are key to interactions. We use them to signify shared meanings. In this study, I find narrators engaging with symbols in order to construct definitions supporting their respective perspectives. For example, the pro-CAA definition, which identifies Muslims as outsiders and non-compatible with the

land and its culture, uses the partition of 1947 as evidence of such incompatibility. Researchers argue that the genocide after the partition resulted from hundreds of years of communal enmity, unnecessary hastiness, lack of planning, and poor communication (Siddiqui 2021; Pandey 2001). Nonetheless, in the pro-CAA narratives, the partition of 1947 symbolizes the betrayal of Muslims and identifies them as the culprit.

Besides identifying a collective *Other*, citizenship claims also focus on building the in-group. Anderson (1983) argues that a nation is an *imagined community* as its members imagine a communion despite never knowing their fellow members. The pro-CAA narratives define the in-group by emphasizing the compatibility of specific religious communities with the land and its culture. This nativist definition relies on a romanticized history– where India is identified as the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Thus, not only do the narrators identify these select communities as the original inhabitants, but their cultural identities are also perceived as aligned with the land's identity. And with that, India is reimagined with a symbolic cultural identity, which strengthens the claims of specific communities and undermines that of others.

The anti-CAA narratives, too, are built on selected definitions and symbols. The anti-CAA narrators, too, bring cultural references to oppose the CAA. However, in these narratives, the definition of culture implicates diversity. Unlike the pro-CAA narrators, who prioritize cultural homogeneity in citizenship, the anti-CAA narrators emphasize cultural diversity. Diversity, according to them, is what distinguishes India from all the other nations. For them, preferential treatment based on faith creates a recipe for disaster and harms the country's social fabric. These narrators also continue emphasizing secular

values to express discontent toward the act. They define the CAA as unconstitutional as the constitution of India upholds secular ideologies and prevents preferential treatment based on caste, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexuality.

The anti-CAA narratives also refer to the CAA as a divide-and-rule tactic. Divide-and-rule not only symbolizes divisional politics but a particular tactic that is often associated with colonial rule. Thus, the reference to divide-and-rule signifies a comparison between the current BJP government and British rule in the pre-independence era. Such reference signifies a lack of faith in the BJP. Not only do they argue that by introducing religion as a citizenship criterion, the government attempts to set apart the in-group from the out-group, but they express anxiety about the consequences of such polarizing politics.

Divide-and-rule is not the only pre-independence era symbol that the anti-CAA discourse highlights. Amir Aziz's poem, which I use as a stimulus text, mentions the word *Inquilab*– an Urdu word with an Arabic root. The word means revolution and has been widely used in the nationalist freedom movement in pre-independence India. Such choices of words provide a glimpse into the meaning-making process where the opposition is identified not only as an oppressor but outsider.

This study creates the possibility of conceptualizing citizenship in a holistic way. The structures within which we operate are not wholly external to us. They reside within us as well as around us. They reside in our interactions, as well as in our beliefs, ideologies, and actions, because it is social interactions where we first start to make sense of structures. Nonetheless, we are also born within existing structures and are shaped by

them. These structures guide us in navigating the social world. Therefore, citizenship theories, which emphasize structural components or theories which explain the micro-level of human interactions and experiences, leave much unexplored. This study explains how we must take both sides into consideration at once.

Moreover, this project guides us to see the value in not conceptualizing citizenship as a structure that is operating in a void. No structure operates alone. We cannot effectively construct a theory unless we consider how a structure operates in connection with other structures, influences them, or is shaped by them. Citizenship operates with a multitude of other structures, such as religion, gender, caste, and these interactions shape our experiences and interactions. Our structural positions can help us access specific definitions for making citizenship claims which are unavailable to other people.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the insights it produces, this study is not without limitations. One of the limitations is theoretical. SSI maintains that although definitions are connected to the larger structure, interactional contexts carry immense significance in shaping those definitions (see Stryker 1983:192). My project is qualitative in nature, and what I have captured is through interviews. Although using stimulus texts created certain advantages, the interactions were limited between the respondent and the researcher. Future researchers can consider incorporating focus groups or participant observation in the

research design to deal with this limitation. Such designs will also allow researchers to capture variations in definitions based on interactional context.

Contextualizing the project in terms of the CAA 2019 guided the flow of the narratives. As we saw, the explicit focus of the CAA and religion brought forth the discussion regarding partition, the Indian constitution, and secularist values. Nonetheless, we must not forget that citizenship and citizen identity are realized through a dynamic, heterogeneous, and complex process. Depending on the issue under discussion, the citizenship narrative can flow in several directions. Although we cannot generalize the findings of this research, this project provides an in-depth understanding of how citizens draw the symbolic boundaries of Indian citizenship and how they make sense of citizen identity in the context of the CAA.

A third? limitation is that this research cannot explain the variations in accessing definitions while making citizenship claims. For example, why do some individuals access the nativist definition and argue that Hindus are the original inhabitants when other self-identified Hindu narrators carefully choose other definitions to establish identity claims? There seems to be an ideological difference in how these groups perceive the in-group and the out-group. This difference in ideology perhaps can explain such choices. However, such explanations are reductionist and simplistic in nature. Some of the narratives indicate that such ideological differences could be due to the narrators' structural positionalities, but the data is not sufficient to evaluate this claim. Future researchers should consider these variations and design a plan that can produce an explanation.

Last, a significant limitation of this study emerges from the demographic characteristics of the respondent pool. Not only does this study overrepresent people from communities that are included in the CAA, but the narrators mainly belong to the privileged sections of Indian society. The respondents' demographic characteristics resemble my socio-cultural locations and those of the two key contact persons who helped recruit respondents. Although there is a mix of pro-CAA and anti-CAA narrators, having more voices from people who self-identify as Muslims could provide a distinct perspective. During this project I had the opportunity to interview one individual who self-identifies as Muslim. The narrative is rich and indicates that the current citizenship discourse is breeding a hyphenated identity for citizens who are Muslim. A future project should not only consider investigating how Muslim citizens make sense of their citizen identity within the current citizenship discourse, but how they navigate the tropes of 'cultural identity' and 'cultural India.'

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APPENDICES

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic questions:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Family/schooling/job
4. Are you religious? Did you grow up in a religious family?
5. How interested are you in politics? Do you keep yourself informed in current politics?

CAA and Citizenship related questions:

1. What does citizenship mean to you?
2. What does it mean to you to be an Indian citizen?

3. What does it mean to you to be an Indian citizen?

4. What do you think citizenship entails?

5. What do you think of the national identity of India?

6. What is 'Indian-ness,' according to you? What characteristics do you think should an Indian citizen have?

7. What do you envision as an ideal citizen of India? What characteristics must one have to be a citizen? What are the characteristics of not so ideal citizen?

8. Have you heard of the Citizenship Amendment Act or CAA? Would you please share what you know of CAA?

9. If you have to take a stand concerning CAA, what would it be? Why?

10. Why do you think CAA is good or bad for the nation? How do you believe CAA will shape India?

11. As a citizen, how do you feel about CAA? Do you think CAA might affect you? How?

Stimulus Text - 1

(The newspaper article reporting CAA related views expressed by Amartya Sen. Sen, an economist, and professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard, refers to the CAA as a violation of constitutional provisions)

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/caa-violates-constitutional-provisions-amartya-sen/articleshow/73151348.cms

1. Do you agree with Sen? Why/why not?

2. What are your thoughts on religion and CAA?
3. What are your thoughts on citizenship and religion in India?

Stimulus Text – 2

(The newspaper article reporting the views of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the CAA. Modi, in a public rally, stated that the Indian Muslims need not fear CAA. He also said that the CAA is not discriminatory.)

2019. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/citizenship-law-nrc-have-nothing-to-do-with-indian-muslims-pm-Narendra-modi/articleshow/72924298.cms

1. Do you agree with Modi's statement? Why/why not?
2. Narendra Modi suggests that the fear and chaos was created by his rival parties who want to divide India. What do you think of the fear/ anxiety stirred up by the CAA? Is this fear justified?
3. Modi mentions "unity in diversity." How do you think the CAA affects unity?

Stimulus Text – 3

(The ScoopWhoop video showing poet-activist Amir Aziz reciting his poem[i] in an anti-CAA rally in Delhi, India, on December 19, 2020. Delhi's Jamia Milia University has been at the forefront of protest since the very beginning. Police entered the campus of the university on December 15, 2020, and attacked the students. Amir Aziz is a former student of Jamia Milia.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3Lv-MJVdQA&t=19s

1. What do you think/ how do you feel about the message that Aziz delivers?

2. Do you agree with him? Why/why not?

3. Do you think CAA poses any threat to you?

The poem is in Hindi and Urdu. Here is a translation.

> *You can surely kill us with bullets, but we die by those bullets—that is not necessary.*
> *It is true that we are terrified of death.*
> *It is certainly true that we are terrified of death, but it is not necessary that the terror of death will cower us.*
> *I am the child of Hawwa and Adam,*
> *My motherland is Hindustan.*
> *Mohammad is my prophet,*
> *Allah is my God,*
> *Ambedkar is my teacher,*
> *Buddha is my beginning,*
> *Nanak is my Guru,*
> *Peace is my religion,*
> *Love is my faith-*
> *I refuse to be cowered by the scare of death.*
> *I refuse to die an untimely death.*
> *I refuse*
> *Because to refuse tyranny is the first step towards revolution.*
> *I refuse to step back.*

I refuse to step back.

And
In my own country-
In my own country,
I am to receive alms instead of rights - I disapprove.
In my own country-
I am to receive alms instead of rights- I disapprove.
I am to be written like a name in some register - I disapprove.
I refuse to receive alms instead of rights.
I refuse to be written like a name in some register.
I refuse.
I refuse.
And,
The verdict on my life is to be decided by a 7-hours parliament bill - I disapprove.
The verdict on my identity is to be decided by some identity cards - I disapprove.
I refuse such bills; I refuse my identity card.

That I call a wound - a flower, I call a tyrant - a prophet
I call a wound - a flower, I call a tyrant - a prophet,
I call a curfew - a democracy, I call hatred - principle.
I refuse all such tendencies of my tongue that call a lie - a truth.

I refuse.
I refuse, because
To refuse tyranny is a step towards revolution.
I refuse to step back.

Stimulus Text – 4

(A photo of a Muslim man getting attacked by a mob. The headline says, “A Mob Out for Blood: India’s Protests Pit Hindus against Muslims.” This photo became the face of the Delhi riot in February 2020. The riot started soon after one of the BJP leaders (Kapil Mishra) gave an ultimatum to the CAA protesters participating in sit-in protests in the Jaffrabad area.

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-citizenship-protests-survivor/a-mob-out-for-blood-indias-protests-pit-hindus-against-muslims-idUSKCN20K2V8

1. What do you think of the headline?
2. We know that the Delhi riot mostly affected Muslims. Do you think the CAA has been responsible for this riot?

A mob out for blood: India's protests pit Hindus against Muslims

By Danish Siddiqui, Devjyot Ghoshal

7 MIN READ

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Mohammad Zubair was on his way home from a local mosque in northeast New Delhi when he came across a large crowd. He turned towards an underpass to avoid the commotion; it proved to be a mistake.

IRB APPROVAL PAGE

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 01/21/2021
Application Number: IRB-21-33
Proposal Title: Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 (India) Oral History Project

Principal Investigator: Dhruba Sinha Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Monica Whitham Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744- 3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

Dhruba Das

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: MAKING SENSE OF CITIZENSHIP AND CITIZEN IDENTITY IN LIGHT OF THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT (CAA) 2019: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MICRO-LEVEL CITIZENSHIP PROCESSES AMONG INDIAN CITIZENS

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Sociology (Honors) at Kalyani Mahavidyalaya, Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal, India in 2007.

Experience:

Instructor of Record – Oklahoma State University, Stillwater
SOC 3993: Sociology of Aging
SOC 3223: Collective Behavior and Social Movement
SOC 1113: Introductory Sociology

Professional Memberships: American Sociological Association, Alpha Kappa Delta – The International Sociology Honor Society