The Narratives of African-American and Black British Male Islamic Converts in Saudi Arabia

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2022

Declaration

I, Ibrahim Ali Alkhateeb, attest to the fact that the work described in this thesis is entirely mine. I confirm that where information was drawn from other sources, it was noted in the thesis.

Word counts: 88694 excluding references and appendices

Ibrahim Alkhateeb

Signed………………….

Abstract

Conversion to a different religion is a complex process that has been studied in a variety of domains in the social sciences. It is an area of applied linguistics that has received less attention. In my research, I explore Islamic religious conversion in Saudi Arabia's hyper masculine culture, where religiosity appears to overlap with hyper and at times toxic masculinity. My goal is to learn more about the experiences and identities of African- American and Black British male Islamic converts in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, I aim to answer the following research questions; how are these male converts' experiences performatively enacted within the context of life story research interviews in the KSA? What are the commonalities that performatively emerge in their stories? What does this reveal about the complexity of male Islamic converts' experiences, particularly with regard to the indexing of heterosexuality, masculinity and race that are invoked by these converts? Identity is understood in a Butlerian sense as performatively enacted by repeating, conforming to and sometimes subverting congealed senses of self in discourse (Butler, 1990). I use a multidisciplinary narrative research method which draws on literature from several domains (Bamberg, 2004; Baynham, 2014; Durante, 1994; Hill and Zepeda, 1992) in order to construct a data analytic model that I call performative narrative analysis. My research demonstrates how converts use various discursive and bodily acts to performatively construct their religiosity and sense of self as males in their narratives. It also explains how the differences and commonalties that are enacted performatively are relevant to their life trajectories and the racial discourses in the places from which they come. The data demonstrate how converts have constructed

a sense of belonging to an imagined male Islamic brotherhood, which has no place in the secular spheres in which they live.

Impact Statement

Taking as its subject the narratives of African-American and Black British converts to Islam, this study has the potential to make an impact both within and beyond academia. Within academia, and particularly with regard to research in the field of applied linguistics, the study draws on Butler's (1990) concept of performativity and applies it to narrative analysis, paying particular attention to the converts' use of language in their stance taking and the attribution of agency in their life stories, all of which is complemented by ethnographically-informed data (researcher observations and photographs) to enhance the analysis. My analytic model, which I have termed performative narrative analysis, draws on the work of Bamberg (2004a), Baynham (2014) and Labov (1972) and has the potential to impact on future narrative studies. The study also contributes to the literature on religious conversion and the anthropology of religion by providing insights into the complexity of conversion experiences and the ways in which race and masculinity can intersect in conversion trajectories. Thus, it fills the gap in religious studies identified by Stromberg (2014), who argues for a holistic narrative analytic method to examine the conversion experience and account for its discursive features. At the same time, the study has the potential to impact on how conversion is understood outside academia. Given the informants have all moved to Saudi Arabia to work in the English language sector, their stories have the potential to enhance local understandings, not only of such teachers' trajectories, but also of the nature of the difficulties (both religious and professional) they can encounter.

Acknowledgment

In 2016 I started working on this thesis. Initially, this was a fancy idea that seemed to come to life in only dreams. But it was with the support of many people that I was able to get to this point in my career. I will start with my small family, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. I could not have finished this job without the help and support of my soulmate, Ghaliyah, and especially thanks to Ali, my older son, who I used to forget about in my drafting, and Mohammed, my younger son, who is currently sitting in my lab while I am typing these letters. Thank you so much to Asma and Ali, my parents, for their love, support, and enthusiasm.

I am indebted to my primary supervisor Professor John Gray, and my secondary supervisor Dr Ruanni Tupas and my former supervisor Dr Sian Preece, who donated generously of their time to keep me focused and on track at each level of the research process. First, I am grateful to John for his long-term, crucial guidance and assistance. John guided me away from the solitary spells of despair that are an unavoidable part of writing a PhD thesis, perhaps unconsciously. He helped me keep faith in myself as an academic researcher and thesis writer by providing a strategic balance of praise and criticism. Thank you, John, for your professional and constructive supervision. Ruanni, to whom I owe my sincere gratitude for his unwavering support, helpful suggestions, and helpful comments throughout my thesis work. I am especially grateful to Sian for her thoughtful comments and support, as well as her extended commitment as a primary supervisor for my work. I wish her great times in her retirement.

Warm thanks to Hannah Tracy, my special needs adviser, the members of the Discourse, Society, and Culture CCM seminar, and Katie Finnegan for their unwavering support and helpful recommendations.

Last but not least, I would want to express my sincere gratitude to my research participants, who, despite their busy lives, took the time to share their deeply personal experiences and views with me. This work would not have been possible without your personal stories.

Dedication

To the women in my life: my grandmother Roggayh, my Mother Asma, and my Love

Ghaliyah

To Jaber whose sudden death interrupted his story

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The Gloss of Arabic words

al-Ikhwān	'The Muslim Brothers' is a political movement that is different from the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt. It was formed from the tribal men who fought with King Abdulaziz
Allāh	*Allāh* is the Islamic reference to deity, which is equivalent to God in Christian theology. However, in Islamic theology *Allāh* is genderless.
Aslam	To become Muslim
al-Tawḥīd	The submission to *Allāh* as the only god
'Bāyh	A long gown that is worn among women in Saudi Arabia
Da'wat	The practice of preaching
Dhukūrat	Maleness
Dīn	Creed
Fṭrh	The innate state of human as believer of the existence of God
Ḥadīth	The sayings of the Prophet which are considered the second sacred text in Islam after Quran
Hajj	The pilgrimage to Mecca. It is considered the fifth pillar of Islam and an obligation to all Muslims who can do it.
Hay'at	The religious police in Saudi Arabia. It has been abolished in recent years
Hijrat	The immigration from Muslim to non-Muslim country
Jannat	Paradise
Masjid	Mosque
Muṭawwi'	Religious people and mainly associated with Wahhābī religious people
najd	The central area of Arabia where most of the political elites originate

Rāyah al-Tawḥīd	The statement that there is no god except *Allāh* and Mohammed is his last messenger as written on the Saudi flag
Rujūlah	Manhood
Sahwa	A religious movement in the 1980s and 1990s and has been condemned recently in Saudi Arabia
Shahada	The statement of Islam that 'there is no god except *Allāh* and Mohammed is his last messenger'
Sherk	Worshiping a god other than *Allāh*
Tabarouj	Obscenity
Tah' feed Quran	Quranic school
Ummah	It is a collective reference to Muslim people as a single group bound together
Ummrah	the religious pilgrimage to Mecca that can be done at any time.
Walī	The male guardian for a female
Wahhābī Movement	A religious movement that adopts Salafism and insists on interpreting the Quran with regard to what the Prophet of Islam says and the recorded sayings of his early companions
Zakāt	The money Muslims must pay to the poor if they can afford it. It is considered the third pillar of Islam and an obligation to all Muslims

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The postmodern world has been characterised by a persistence of religion in the face of an all-powerful science which is profoundly imbricated in politics and commerce. While religion was thought to no longer have a place in modernity, it has returned to play a pivotal role in both the political and social realms (Habermas, 2010). Researchers across fields have started to reconsider its importance and to account for its influence in a tumultuous world of economic upheaval, immigration crises, the Arab Spring and the rise of populist politics. Within this context, religion has become a major player and a politically manipulated apparatus.

Although Islam has been in the modern West for some time, its visibility is indeed more recent and its presence has been widely debated in terms of whether it should be integrated into western Judaeo-Christian cultures, or if it has no place within these cultures (Ozyurek, 2014). Various aspects of Islam have been researched, including its jurisprudence, its attitude to modernity and the phenomenon of religious conversion, which is the focus of the present study.

At the same time, gender (specifically masculinity) and race, which are also central to this study, are widely researched topics within academia. The present study draws on – and aims to contribute to - these diverse literatures (namely that of religious conversion, gender and race) through an investigation of the conversion stories of

four African-American and Black British[1] males, whose conversion and religious journey resulted in them moving to live in Saudi Arabia. In the coming sections, I outline the motivation behind the present study. This is followed by an overview of the context of the study, which is Saudi Arabia. Then I outline my research aim and the structure of the thesis.

1.2 The researcher and the motivation behind the present study

Initially it will be helpful to outline my personal journey, which has ended with me studying for a PhD. Although the present study does not take an autoethnographic approach to investigating religious conversion, I find that my experiences, background and motivation contribute to the research outcomes.

I was born in a city in northern Saudi Arabia to parents who had to abandon their education to work on the farm and in the house to support their family. My father had to leave middle school in order to help my grandfather at the farm. Later, farming was not enough to support his family, so he had to also work from time to time as a lorry driver. My mother completed her primary school education before leaving education to help her mother at home. My parents were married at a very young age; they were both only 17 when they got married. They lived in my grandfather's house at the edge of our old farm, where we still live.

I had a difficult start to school, where I struggled a lot with reading and writing. When I received my first-year report, I well remember my father talking to himself, saying 'I don't think this boy can carry on his studies'. His words still echo in my ears, and I

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[1] I intend to capitalize black in Black British and Black People as I consider them to be proper nouns

was sure that my father did not know I was listening. I got used to being quiet, avoiding class activities as much as possible. I tried to do anything I could just to avoid being asked to read something out loud. I was never appreciated by my teachers and was most of the time underestimated. The positive part of primary school is that I did not fail any year and managed to get through. At the time, the only thing I really liked and wanted to do was reading. The school library was small and average students like me were not usually made to feel very welcome there. I also managed to survive the intermediate and secondary schools with the same level of achievement, while still maintaining my passion for reading and libraries. My mother felt that passion; she used to see me borrowing books from the school library. When I managed to enter college, she bought me the Arabic version of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* – the most precious gift I have ever received. Based on my academic score in high school, I was accepted to study a bachelor's degree in English. To be honest, it was never something I wanted to do. However, this was my only option; I was driven by luck and the available chances rather than by what I wanted. In fact, my passion was for reading about the history of intellectuality in both the West and the Islamic world. At a young age, I had an unsuccessful attempt at reading *Capital* by Marx and the *Critique of Pure Reason* by Kant. I was introduced to Foucault, Sartre and Nietzsche through various reading that was not easy for me to grasp. I still found it hard to read; I did not know why it took me longer to finish a page that takes people much less time to read.

After I finished my degree, I moved to teach in an intermediate school in a village south of my hometown. My ongoing problem with reading and writing started to become obvious to my colleagues and students, which caused me much embarrassment. When I started my career as a teacher in 2007, Saudi Arabia was

experiencing many changes and there was a trend to go and study abroad. Because I was not eligible for a scholarship, I had to work for a few years to save money and finance my education. I came to the University of Sheffield, where I enrolled on an MA programme in Applied Linguistics with TESOL. After I finished my degree, I was lucky enough to secure a post in the university in my hometown. Later in my adulthood, my beloved wife, Ghaliyah, who is a special education specialist, discovered the real problem behind my learning difficulty. She knew from the first time we met that I am severely dyslexic.

I want to skip back in time to secondary school. I remember after 9/11, the school arranged a visit from an American Muslim convert to come and talk to us about Islam. The American stood towering over all the students and from his appearance I could tell that he had an African background. He greeted us in Arabic and then delivered his speech in English, which was translated later to us in Arabic. He said how Islam led him to the truth behind living and he condemned the racist American society, stressing how important it is for Muslims to come together and defend our religion. That was among the most impactful visits we had during my school days. This was the first time I met a western convert to Islam. That experience and my complex sense of attachment to the man was hard to understand. I had always had the feeling that westerners are the 'other', for different reasons However, with that man, I felt that despite him being an American, he was still a brother. After I started to teach at a university level, I met many more western converts to Islam from different countries: the United States, the UK, Australia and Canada. I became close to them and formed friendships. From time to time, I heard from them about their journeys to Islam. We also developed a common sense of belonging as Muslim brothers.

As before and driven by luck, I was offered a very generous scholarship to do a PhD and I found that I had the passion to explore the conversion stories of my friends and what we can learn about their lives in Saudi Arabia. In the next section, I introduce the context of my study.

1.3 Setting the context

In a broad sense, the context of the present study is Saudi Arabia, an Arabic-speaking country where Islam is the dominant religion. All Saudis are expected to identify as Muslims. Religion is a key constitutive element of the national identity in the country and the state endorses religion as the cornerstone of national unity and uses the media, education and social institutions to emphasize its role in social life. Non-Muslims live in Saudi Arabia for employment purposes but are not allowed to practise their religious rituals publicly. However, the country has witnessed many changes recently which are relevant to my study. In this section, I intend to introduce the Saudi context by focusing on the historical formation of the country, which explains the role of religion in the making of Saudi Arabia. I then move to provide an overview of modern Saudi society and its relationship with Islam. Next, I shed light on the emergence of foreign labour in modern Saudi Arabia, with a specific focus on aspects pertinent to my informants and the hiring policy of the country. Then I elucidate the patriarchal, and hence masculine, nature of Saudi Arabia, especially at the time when I collected the data for my study.

1.3.1 The formation of the Saudi state

The birth of Saudi Arabia refers to the event of the alliance in 1727 between Mohammed bin Saud, the ruler of Diriyah, and Mohammed bin Abdulwahhab, the

Salafist religious jurisprudence scholar who struggled because of his religious activism and was exiled from his hometown. Mohammed bin Saud hosted Mohammed bin Abdulwahhab, and the two men agreed on starting a religious reform that sought the purification of Islam and the reestablishment of what they believed to be its true message by promoting an orthodox interpretation of Islam and bringing back the practices of early Muslims, *the Salaf,* which refers to the pious predecessors of the prophet of Islam, Mohammed. The two men agreed that Bin Saud would handle the political affairs while Bin Abdulwahhab would be responsible for the proliferation of the religious movements. The newly formed state managed to control a vast part of the Arabian Peninsula, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medinah, which led to a confrontation between the House of Saud and the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire managed to reclaim control over Arabia and the whole of the territories of the Saudi state. A few years later, the House of Saud entered another era when Turki bin Abdullah managed to retake central Arabia, *Najd*, from the assigned governor by the Ottoman Empire. This second phase ended in internal fights between the Turki grandsons and led to the collapse of what is usually referred to as the Second Saudi State. In 1902, Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman, a descendent of Turki bin Abdullah, retook Riyadh. Thirty years later, Abdulaziz announced himself as the King of Saudi Arabia, a country that forms the majority of the area of the Arabian Peninsula, including Mecca and Medinah (Wynbrandit, 2010).

The alliance between Bin Saud and Bin Abdulwahhab laid the foundation of the country as a religious state that patronages Salafism by promoting the *Rāyah al-Tawḥīd*, the statement of submission. The movement influenced the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who were mainly nomads or Bedouins of Arabia. The subjectification of the tribes of Arabia to the Wahhābī movement accumulated into a

strong identification with the movement as symbolic to their sense of themselves as Saudi. The struggle for the formation of the third state was driven by the ideology that there was a need to reconcile differences between tribes and come under the legitimate heir of the House of Saud, Abdulaziz, in order to re-establish the purification movement of bin Abdulwahhab. This led to an emergence of a political elite called *al-Ikhwān*.[2] This movement made the tribal men strongly affiliate their religiosity with the way of life to the extent that the boundaries between their nomadic way of life and religion blurred. Consequently, *Tawheed* and Salafism come to be not just a religious sect and a doctrine of religious interpretation, but a self-identification that bounded the tribal men of Arabia together under the rulers of the House of Saud. This has led to a specific explanation of the meaning of belonging for Saudis (Davis, 2018); the specificity of the Wahhābī interpretation of the Sharia laws has consequences for the affiliation with the state and the sense of belonging among Saudis. This is explained in more detail in the next section

1.3.2 Modern Saudi society

The rise of modern Saudi Arabia is mainly associated with the discovery of oil reserves; its real economic transformation was in the 1950s, when the country started an urbanization programme that aimed to settle the nomadic tribes of Arabia, who comprised about 80% of the total population at that time, into town and villages by investing the revenue that came from oil into modernizing the Saudi society. The country witnessed an increase in the population, which was followed by the

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[2] *al-Ikhwān* is different from the Muslim Brotherhood, the political movement that started in Egypt in the early twentieth century.

introduction of formal educational and health systems as well as the establishment of the governmental institutions which were central to the monarchy (Yamani, 2000). Saudis started enrolling in education and their way of life changed from being dependent on herding and agriculture to working for the government and the emerging oil industry.

1.3.2.1 Modern Saudi and Islam

After the Arab defeat in the Arab–Israel war in 1967, the Arabic nationalist movement lost its credibility as being bound to Arab unity, which is central to the ideology of Arab nationalism. At the same time, there followed a rebirth of Islamist ideology that was patronised by the Saudi monarchy as a response to Arab nationalism, which was promoted by states who deemed Arab nationalism as a threat (Gerges, 2018). This policy drove Saudi Arabia to be the home of Islamist movement activists who escaped the hostility of Arab nationalist regimes in Egypt and Syria. The Islamist movement peaked in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s under what is usually referred to as the *Sahwa* Movement (the awakening movement). The movement aimed to modernize Islamic traditions in order to be a counterpart to the secular trait of Arabic nationalism. This concurred with the fact that the formation of Saudi society was strongly bound to Wahhabism, which was integral to the newly settled Bedouins, who had regarded the state to be a patron of *Rāyah al-Tawḥīd*; something that is reflected in the folklore and popular culture of Saudi Arabia (Alhussein, 2019; Davis, 2018). Accordingly, Saudi Arabia was portrayed, or introduced itself at a particular moment, with the image of the land of true Islam, which is seen in Malcolm X's praise of Saudi Arabia as the land of Muslims and *al-Tawḥīd* (Younge, 2007); this is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.1, Chapter 2.

The bond between the Saudi state and Salafism delineates what Hall (1997) describes as the narrative of an imagined shared history of Saudis about their state. In this imagination, the *Ummah* and state belonging overlap and at some level the *Ummah* has primacy for Saudis in their identification over their belonging to the state (Doumanto, 2003; Moaddel and De Jong, 2013). Davis (2018) argues that this complex sense of belonging among Saudis makes the country appear to be what he calls a state, not a nation; this is because the Saudis' sense of themselves as a nation is not encapsulated within geographical and institutional boundaries. This is also reflected in the survey analysed by Moaddel and De Jong (2013), who compared two surveys on how Saudis identify themselves in 2003 and 2011. They reported that in 2003, only 17% of Saudis identified themselves as Saudi first, while 80% identified themselves as Muslim first.

In recent years and due to the political situation in the Middle East, the Saudi government has started a new transformational policy that aimed to transform Saudi Arabia from being a state with a strong religious identification (Davis, 2018) to a national identification based on the uniqueness of the Saudi culture (Thompson, 2019). The country has started educational reforms by implementing different policies targeting educational and cultural transformation. They started to celebrate a national day and implemented educational material that emphasized Saudi nationhood as a means of developing a sense of patriotism. The country has also started to break away from some of the Wahhābī interpretation of Sharia laws (Alhussein, 2019). This new policy has impacted the Saudi identity; Moaddel and De Jong (2013) reported that Saudis' self-identification, which I mentioned above, changed in a survey in 2011, in which 48% of Saudis identified themselves as Saudi first and 46% identified themselves as Muslim first.

The transformation of the country intensified after the rise of the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to power. The young prince advocates new domestic and international policy that puts Saudis first. The Saudi new nationalism underpins the rise of a new Saudi Arabia that appears more secular than its previous forms of governing, which suggests a distancing of Saudi identity from its prior religious character (Alhussein, 2019; Thompson, 2019). This fracture between the old and new Saudi Arabia has introduced a new religious movement that tolerates the changes in the kingdom (Thompson, 2019). By the time I was embarking on the interviews, the informants of the present study were aware of the changes to Saudi society and how these changes were affecting their integration as brothers of Islam who could belong to the land of Muslims. This will be discussed in detail in the course of my study. Having reviewed the relation between Islam and modern Saudi Arabia, I move to set out the socio-economical aspect of living and working in Saudi Arabia for foreigners.

1.3.3 The oil era and foreign labour

The discovery of enormous oil reserves in Saudi Arabia brought tremendous wealth to the country, and a new era began. The country witnessed an unprecedented urbanization of Bedouins and launched its health and educational systems in the 1950s. This also coincided with an influx of foreign labour, especially from neighbouring Arabic-speaking countries and westerners to work in technical jobs in the oil industry to help the Saudi emerging economy and its need for labour. At that time, Saudi Arabia was dependent on foreign labour for most of the civil service, including the technical jobs needed in the oil industry. In the 1960s the Saudi government launched a citizenship scheme which later influenced its immigration

policy. From that time, it has become difficult for foreigners to obtain Saudi citizenship (Yamani, 2000). However, the country has continued to be a destination for foreign workers. Oil has made the transformation of Saudi society skyrocket in a way that has been rarely witnessed in the twentieth century. The Saudi population tripled in the 1970s when more foreign labour came to work in the country; this can be seen in how the number of expatriates increased from a million in the 1970s to three million in the 1980s (Elyas and Picard, 2018). Now, the country is home to about 13 million people who are identified as foreigners and they form 32% of the total population, according to the General Authority of Statistics in Saudi Arabia (General Authority of Statistic, 2018).

1.3.4 Higher education and English language teaching

Another relevant aspect to my study is the expansion of higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia during the reign of King Abdullah. This new policy was driven by providing education to anyone and follows the educational reform programme mentioned in section 1.3.2.1. Before 2005, Saudi Arabia was home to only eight universities, which were central to the major cities. The number of universities has expanded to 30 public universities and 12 private ones. The country has also implemented new language policies, where proficiency in English is required to enrol in nature sciences, engineering and medical sciences programmes. Most universities have a preparatory year in which all students need to pass English and maths courses in order to enter their university programmes. In addition, the country started a scholarship programme that enabled Saudis to study abroad to pursue higher education all over the world and anglophone countries were the most popular destinations.

These educational reforms have increased the demand for English language teachers in Saudi Arabia, meaning there has been an influx of language teachers from all over the world (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Contracts for teachers are complex and determined by nationality; those matching so-called native speakers benefit from higher salaries and longer contracts regardless of their educational background and experience. Native speakers in Saudi institutions are vaguely defined and associated with more western countries and racialized with whiteness (Almayez, 2018).

1.3.5 Socio-cultural aspects of living in Saudi Arabia as a foreigner

Broadly speaking, Saudi Arabia is a religious conservative country. Many of the social norms are driven by the religious and cultural norms that are widely associated with the tribal way of life. Alcohol is banned in Saudi Arabia and many forms of entertainment are not integral to the Saudi culture. In fact, cinemas, theatre and live music events were only just permitted by the time I started the fieldwork. Saudi society values the family and the tribe and complies with its structure and tradition. The family and tribal norms and traditions are understood to follow Islam (Alrashidi and Phan, 2015).

Arabic is the dominant language and is endorsed as the national language of Saudi Arabia. There are other languages that are commonly spoken by foreigners in the country, such as Urdu, Pashtun and Filipino, but they have no status or recognition by the government. English is also widely spoken in Saudi Arabia; it is important for business and has become crucial for competing in the labour market. The many non-Arabic white-collar workers depend on English for communication (Alfahadi,2012). English is also widely spoken among young Saudi nationals who were affected by the educational reforms after 2005 (Elyas, 2008).

If foreigners work for employers that have over 50 employees, they are usually offered accommodation in a private compound that separates them from the society around them, which is the case for those who work in higher education. Compounds provide foreigners with opportunities to maintain their way of life without being bothered by the conservative way of life outside the compound (Bombacci, 1998). However, the employees are not obliged to live in the compound and can arrange their own housing. In this case, they usually rent private homes outside the compound in the city, which was the case for some of the informants in the present study.

Another aspect of working in Saudi Arabia is that non-Saudi nationals are not allowed to work for the government for more than ten years. This was implemented in 2005 to limit foreigners' opportunity to obtain Saudi nationality. It is also driven by the Saudization job policy, which seeks to replace foreigners with Saudi national labour. Working for the government is considered a well-paid stable job. This has restrained some of my informants' employment opportunities and caused them to miss out on contract renewal. Some of them had to move their contracts to private contractors who run the foundation programme at Saudi universities. The next section sheds light on the patriarchal nature of Saudi Arabia, focusing in particular on masculinity as a core element of this, especially at the time when the data of the present study was collected.

1.3.6 Masculinity in Saudi Arabia

This section introduces the reader to the socio-cultural norms of Saudi society, paying particular attention to masculinity. Beforehand, I would like to affirm the view of Thompson (2019), who argues that researchers risk reducing the socio-cultural

norms of Saudi Arabia through a homogenous treatment of a heterogeneous Saudi society; there are always specific differences between social groups and among regions. However, I focus here on the manner in which ways of doing masculinity intersect with ways of manifesting religiosity. This is particularly relevant to the context of my study.

Saudi Arabia has always been associated with the tribal presence of its communities. As stated earlier, Tribal structures have been integral to the social contract between the ruling elite and the nomadic people of Arabia. In the pre oil era, Saudi society was governed by tribal norms and the tribes' alliance to the House of Saud was integral to the formation of the country. The tribal affiliation has become more salient recently and has started to dominate the social life and sense of belonging in many parts of the country (Cooke, 2014; Yamani, 2000). This is due to the revival of folklore and popular culture among Saudi youths, and the increasing of the popularity of poetry competitions and camel beauty contests, which are supported by governments in the Gulf region as a means of reintroducing what is so called Arab traditions.

Thompson (2019) argues that socio-tribal norms in Saudi dominate Islamic jurisprudence in men's sense of themselves. Within this tribal culture, I would argue that there is complex sense of masculinity in which tribal traditions intersect with Islamic traditions to form a masculine sense of identity; the boundaries between the tribal and the Islamic are blurred. In this context, masculinity is enacted through different norms and practices. First, it is associated with *Rujūlah* (manliness), which is pertinent to bravery, control of women and family care. The second type of masculinity is associated with *Dhukūrat* (maleness), which is associated with toughness, heterosexuality and aspects of physical appearance like facial hair,

moustaches and beards, which are integral to males' identification of themselves as masculine beings (Mahadeen, 2018). Face hair speaks to respect and dignity, and is symbolic of manhood among Arab; also, the beard adds nuance to these meanings with a more religious emphasis, manifesting religious piety among those called *Muṭawwiʻ* (religious people) in Saudi Arabia. At some moment, these masculinities are read as religious and understood to be Islamic.

The male population in Saudi Arabia outnumbers that of women, forming almost 57% of the population, accounting for both Saudi and non-Saudi nationals. There are almost twice as many non-Saudi men as non- Saudi women: 8.6 million men compared with 3.9 million women (Saudi General Authority of Statistics, 2018). Moreover, men dominate the public sphere in Saudi Arabia; in fact, it was rare that women were seen in public except in markets and they were mostly accompanied by men. Driven by pious Islamic tribal and religious traditions which endow men with power, men controlled most of the public affairs' domain; most of the civic and military jobs were exclusive to men. There was a pervasive gender segregation culture, and women were required to veil in public and restricted to some educational programmes that are deemed to suit women's outlook in the society. Men's control of women was even fostered with the notion of *Walī* (the guardian), who handled many women's affairs; this included marriage arrangements, permission to travel and the right to study and work. Saudi society thus appears as hyper masculine, with men having authoritative power in public life and over women. It also led to a huge gender gap in education and employment (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017).

However, there have been policy changes that advocate empowering women by the Saudi government; these changes started in the reign of King Abdullah and have dramatically intensified since the rise of the new Crown Prince Mohammed bin

Salman. In 2017, the religious police *Hay'at* were abolished. This authority used to monitor the religious outlook in public, in particular ensuring that the public and most especially women were following what they deemed to be the religious code for appearance in public. In addition, women are now allowed to drive, and many of the restrictions on their right to work and study have been abolished by restricting and limiting the power of the male *Walī* to have control over women. These changes have affected the masculine nature of Saudi society and were not welcomed by some tribal and religious groups, as they were viewed to be transforming the tribal and pious religious nature of the Saudi culture along the lines of a more secular and western one (Thompson, 2018). This is relevant to my informants, who appeared to enact a hyper (and in some cases toxic) masculinity along with a pious religious identity, as we will see in my study. However, Thompson (2019) argues that Saudi men enjoy a higher level of freedom to decide upon their plans for studying, marriage, work and leisure than females. Despite all the changes that have been occurring, Saudi men are still in a more advantageous position than women and have the prerogative in Saudi society. Having set out the context of the present study, I illustrate how I situate my study within the existing literature.

1.4 Researching male religious conversion with African descent: finding a place

The present study is a multidisciplinary approach to researching religious conversion. It draws on different traditions in the humanities and social sciences, from linguistic inquiry in general to anthropology of religion. I have investigated relevant literature to theorize my research and develop my research design, in order

to unpack the conversion experience of my informants and understand their identities in their narratives.

While researchers have mainly focused on developing a psychological method to research religious conversion, there has recently been a shift towards a more sociological approach to religious conversion which considers socio-cultural and economic factors (Rambo and Farhadian, 2014). Moreover, religious studies researchers are widely reliant on biographical data in researching religious conversion (Kose, 1996; Lindgren, 2004; Lofland and Stark, 1965; Long and Hadden, 1983; Nieuwkirk, 2006; Stromberg, 1993). These studies take two different perspectives to religious conversion: a top down and a bottom up approach to conversion. The first views converts as less agentive in their conversion, and the latter emphasizes on the agency of the converts in their religious trajectory (Rambo, 1999). There has been also a growing demand for holistic narrative methods to study religious conversion that account for the role of language (Stromberg, 2014). In the present study, I take the bottom up perspective to conversion and adopt a narrative method that is informed by positioning theory, which draws on various traditions from linguistic analysis.

Building on Butlerian performativity (Butler, 1990), I understand narratives of religious conversion as not just a story of religious reaffiliation or change, but rather as a performative enactment of past experiences that is meaningful to the present and to the identities of converts; more details are provided in section 2.2, Chapter 2. From a performative perspective, identity is enacted through performative acts that recite and reiterate previous acts in order to conform to, resist and possibly subvert congealed forms of the self or regulatory frames. Social actors draw on different practices in order to construct themselves and culturally pass as an intelligible black,

male, father, woman and so forth (Butler, 1990). Performativity has been utilized in the field of sociolinguistics by different researchers to investigate masculinity (Cameron, 1997; McIlvenny, 2002; Speer and Potter, 2002), and race (Alexander, 2004; Thompson, 2003). However, I find that Bamberg (2004a, 2011) and Baynham's (2014) work reconcile the challenge of accounting for identity in its two levels of construction: the micro level of the individual and the macro level of social orders (Preece, 2016). Therefore, the analytic model deployed in this thesis draws on various traditions from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis to examine identity construction from a bottom up perspective, which I argue, in alignment with Bamberg (2011) and Baynham (2014), explains the two levels of micro and macro in identity construction. Having explained how I situate my work in the field, in the next section, I outline my research questions.

1.5 The aim of the study

My first encounter with a western convert came from the school visitor, the African-American mentioned in section 1.2. This sparked an interest in religious conversion and race, which was increased by my adult professional interactions with other converts of colour. After I began to consider pursuing a PhD, I became interested in masculinity and gender. As a result, I decided to investigate this further in my thesis, in which I look into the life stories of religious converts, specifically how they performatively enacted their identity in relation to gender, religion, and race. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the complexities of their experience, taking into account the context of their story as expatriates in the K.S.A. Based on this, the research questions are as follows:

1. How are these male converts' experiences performatively enacted within the context of life story research interviews in the K.S.A.?

2. What are the commonalities and differences that performatively emerge in their stories?

3. What does this reveal about the complexity of male Islamic converts' experiences, particularly with regard to gender, race and religion, that are invoked by their narratives?

1.6 The structure of the thesis

In this chapter, I have set out my research context and introduced the reader to necessary background information about the Saudi context and myself, and how I situate my work within the existing literature. In Chapter 2, I will provide an overview of the existing literature on researching religious conversion. I will explore how religious conversion has been defined. Then I will shed light on religion, especially Islam, in the contemporary West and explain the Islamic tradition of religious conversion. After that, I will review relevant empirical work on religious conversion. At the end of the chapter, I will explore how the narrative method has been used to research religious conversion. In Chapter 3, I will outline the theoretical framework of the present study, beginning by outlining the development of identity and language studies within applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. Then I will introduce the notion of performativity and how it developed within the field of linguistics. After that, I will review relevant empirical works that take a performative perspective towards identity construction. In Chapter 4, I will set out my research design. The chapter outlines the empirical procedures taken to conduct my study. The chapter is divided into six main

sections: the research paradigm, research design, data analysis method, semiotic framing of the informants, reflexivity and ethical issues.

In Chapters 5 to 8, I apply the first two steps of the analytic model in which I set out my informants' conversion stories. Each chapter starts with an autobiographical overview of the converts' story. Then I present segments from the converts' narratives that are pertinent to my research interests, which are associated with gender, religion and race. Each data analysis chapter concludes with a commentary on the first two steps of the analysis. In Chapter 9, I apply the third step of the analysis. Here I focus on the three themes of gender, religion and race in greater detail. Chapter 10 is the concluding chapter, in which I respond to my research questions. I also outline the limitations of my research and explain how the present study contributes to the existing literature, before concluding the thesis with final remarks on my research.

Chapter 2: Researching Religious Conversion

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the discipline of religious conversion to readers, who I assume will be mainly affiliated to the fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. Conversion is described, ascribed, maintained or resisted through the narration of events that constitute it. Therefore, the category of conversion is socially a narrated story; it is an event that is only socially possible when narrated. By this I mean that conversion only comes to be a socially recognised self-identification once it is brought into being. Otherwise, it remains invisible and socially meaningless. The conversion phenomenon has been investigated widely by many researchers (Kose, 1996; Lofland and Stark, 1965; Long and Hadden, 1983; Nieuwkirk, 2006), who have aimed to understand *why* people convert to a specific religion. As my first research question suggests, my interest is more in *how* conversion is performatively enacted in oral narratives.

This chapter is structured as follows. I first explore how religious conversion has been defined, briefly examining discourses on religion, especially Islam in the contemporary West. Then I turn to introduce Islamic religious conversion, aligning myself with Rambo (1999), who argues that Islamic religious conversion should be a separate field of research from other types of religious conversion (details below). Alongside this, I attempt to explain the Islamic tradition of religious conversion, aiming to illustrate the process of converting to Islam. Then I highlight the development of religious conversion research, which in its early period was widely

informed by psychological methods. Following this, I review how Islamic religious conversion has been researched. Finally, I demonstrate how the narrative method has been used to research religious conversion.

2.2 Religious conversion and religious discourses in the contemporary West

Religious conversion is a topic of fascination that has played a major role in shaping our world since the early dawn of human civilization. Why people decided to, or were made to, redefine their religious affiliation at a particular moment in their lives is a fascinating phenomenon of human history. In modern time, Religion was positioned as having a peripheral role in modernity, where the secular world had a mostly strained relationship with religion; however, in the postmodern world, in which we are experiencing change and upheaval, religions have again assumed pivotal public roles. Habermas (2010) refers to this era as the 'post-secular' age, which is characterized by the radicalization of both the secular and religions in societies; religions are politically manipulated to revitalize ideologies that could lead, in some cases, to violence, or in others to peace making. The resurrection of religions in the public sphere functions either as a point of convergence or division for people; in the secular western societies in particular, an emerging discourse where religion is a category for defining the in-group and the out-group, or 'other'.

Religions contribute, and can be fundamental, to how people make sense of the world around them, the group they belong to and how they want to be seen. Therefore, the presence of religion can be contentious (Bielo, 2015), as is seen in the emerging presence of Islam in some European countries, where its presence has caused disquiet among those who perceive it as having outsider status and threatening both the secular and Christian traits of European societies; this is

especially the argument put forward by right-wing political groups. Thus, religious

conversion and proliferation have captured the interest of many researchers from

various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology and religious studies

(Malik, 2004).

An early definition of religious conversion was introduced in the early twentieth

century by William James (1902 [1974]) in his pioneering book, *The Varieties of*

Religious Experience. This work has influenced research on religious conversion and

the anthropology of religion throughout the past century (Gartrell and Shannon,

1985; Gooren, 2007; 2014; Greil, 1977; Kose, 1996; Lofland and Stark, 1965; Long

and Hadden 1983; Peek, 2005; Rambo, 1999; Richardson and Stewart, 1978;

Richardson, 1985; Snow and Machalek, 1984; Stark and Finke, 2000; Straus, 1979).

For James, 'to be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience

religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process,

gradual or sudden' (James, 1902 [1974], p.194). Religious conversion is a process of

self-redefinition of the experience of change, a change that entails drawing a fine line

between two worlds where converts present themselves as seekers of truth or

salvation and affirm the positivity of change. James introduced terminologies that

were widely used by early researchers in religious conversion: the **healthy minded**

and the **sick soul**; the first refers to individuals who gradually develop religious

awareness and religious affiliation in the pursuit of truth, whereas the second

corresponds to the sinner, who at a particular moment of his/her life rethinks his/her

religiosity and consequently reaffiliates with religion or converts to new faith.

Nock (1933) argues that conversion only occurs if there is a firm break with a

previous belief and a clear affiliation with a new one. It is a manifestation of a

religious change by a group or a person that is carried out by performing and

embodying practices that reveal the change (Rambo, 1993). Religious conversion 'is a decision or experience followed by a gradually unfolding, dynamic process through which an individual embarks on religious transformation' (Baer, 2008, p.13). Conversion goes further than religious affiliation and entails a change in the convert's worldview, leading to new claims of identity. Converts possibly rethink who they are and rediscover their personal traits, styling themselves to conform with or reaffirm their religious change. This process of self-rediscovery is not finite in time but is ongoing. That is, whenever converts retell their conversion story, they revisit and possibly rethink the motivation for their conversion and the journey of religious adventure, extrapolating new meanings about their life and rediscovering the disposition of their character (as religious, male, father, expatriate, teacher, etc), which are meaningful to their present. In the next section, I introduce Islamic religious conversion and how researchers have argued that it should be considered as a unique type of religious conversion.

2.2.1 Islamic religious conversion

As mentioned in section 2.2 of this chapter, researchers were widely influenced in the early twentieth century by the work of William James, who attempted to propose a universal model of religious conversion that could explain why conversion takes place in different religions (Gooren, 2007 and Rambo, 1999). However, researchers later contended that a universal psychological model for religious conversion would reduce the phenomenon to psychological traits and neglect the role of socioeconomic and cultural factors as well as the specificity of each religion. Therefore, it has been argued that each religious conversion has unique components which are not easily generalizable to all religions. Religions vary in how they

determine who is an insider and outsider, as well as in their institutional structures; these are all constituents of the conversion process (Rambo and Farhadian, 2014). Islam has its own conversion traditions and brings different meaning to the process. First, the word 'Islam' itself is derived from the Arabic verb *Aslam*, which denotes acting in submission to the will of *Allāh* (Hermansen, 2014). In fact, Islamic traditions view conversion not as a process of change but instead as reverting to the innate state of being; human beings accordingly are born with the disposition of recognizing the existence of God and it is their upbringings which can make them non-believers. Converts hence mostly prefer to use the word 'revert' rather than 'convert' to emphasize their relationship with God in their pre-conversion life (Hermansen, 2014 and Ozyurek, 2014). Moreover, Islam emphasizes the prophecies of the prophets before Islam (Moses, Jesus and all the prophets of Abrahamic religions). It regards its message as superseding that of other Abrahamic religions, referring to adherents of other Abrahamic religions as the People of Book. According to this tradition, if the converts were adherents of one of the People of Books' religions and converted to Islam, this would make Them more deserving of heavenly reward as true seekers of religious knowledge. This suggests that Islamic traditions enable converts to maintain continuity in their pre- and post-conversion identities by drawing on these religious themes.

In Islam, there is a textual hierarchy: first, the Quran (which is *Allāh* 's word), then the *Ḥadīth* (the Prophet's words), after that comes the Islamic jurisprudence system (the words of men inspired by their reading/interpretation of the Quran and the *Ḥadīth*) (Geertz, 1968). People come to be Muslim first if they believe in the existence of God and believe in his prophets (Mohammed, Jesus, Moses, Abraham, etc). This is usually manifested by verbally reciting *Shahada*, which is the profession of Faith in

Islam: 'There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God'. *Shahada* can be either privately or publicly performed, following which the person comes to be a Muslim, this should be followed with commitment to Islamic faith. This commitment includes performing the five prayers, donating *Zakāt* (donating 2.5% of their wealth to the poor), fasting during Ramadan, and if possible, doing *Hajj.* These are widely referred to as the Islamic pillars that constitute the Muslim faith; it is through conformity to the deity's will and performing these acts that the sense of being Muslim is enacted. According to the Islamic tradition, after the event of conversion, converts are washed of all their sins that they committed before conversion (Kose, 1996 and Ozyurek, 2014).

Islamic faith is constituted by submission to God and religious formality; that is, believers are obliged to submit to God and follow religious rituals that demonstrate their submission. Therefore, believers are seen as strugglers in maintaining a sinless being, resisting the temptations of the world and regulating their life through adherence to the demands of their faith and the religious laws governing their behaviour. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate for adherents to live joyfully without being sinful. This is enhanced by a continuous conformity to the deity's will (submission) and performing the acts of the Islamic faith (prayer, *Zakāt,* fasting during Ramadan, *Hajj*) (Hermansen, 2014). The discussion so far is widely informed by Sunni Islam; these rituals are common among most Islamic sects, with some differences. However, since the present study focuses only on converts to Sunni Islam, it is not necessary to explore the differences across Islamic sects.

Religious conversion responds to the context in which it takes place. Historically, conversion motivations vary and are influenced by a variety of factors, including socioeconomic and cultural factors, as well as individual interests. As a result,

assessing religious conversion is difficult without taking a comprehensive approach to researching religious conversion and its trends (Baer, 2008; Hermansen, 2014). Within Islamic traditions, conversion to Islam stems from the idea of spreading the belief. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of the addressees in the first three chapters of the Quran are primarily the People of Book. This aims to spread the Islam among them, and also confirms their priority to follow its messenger. The earlier converts in Mecca by the time of Mohammed were primarily polytheists, and it was not until the first contact between Muslims and people outside of Mecca that Islam spread more widely among Arabia's Jewish and Christian communities. Following the establishment of an Islamic state in 634, mass religious conversion occurred in the Levant, Persia, and Mesopotamia during the Persian and East Romanic war with the newly formed Islamic state. Many researchers have argued that socioeconomic factors and the context of war influenced the majority of these early conversions (Baer, 2014).

In modern times, Islamic religious conversion has occurred on an individual basis, especially in western states, with no instances of mass conversion. The secular nature of many western societies, which seems to emphasize the freedom of worship and faith, tolerated, or at least did not impede, instances of conversion. There are countless stories of individual conversion stories, and it would be too onerous task to list them all. However, it can be noted that there are many public figures with conversion stories who are considered widely influential, such as Cat Stevens (known as Yusuf Islam after conversion) and Maryam Jameelah (an American Pakistani writer who converted from Judaism to Islam) (Hamid, 2016). Nevertheless, I focus in this section on two figures who are integral to my research: Mohammed Assad and Malcolm X. They are pertinent to my work because of the

way they presented Saudi Arabia as the land of Islamic Orthodoxy (Salafi) and because their stories served as a meta-narrative which are particularly relevant for the kind of informants at the heart of my study.

Mohammed Assad was a Jewish Austrian traveller and author, born as Leopold Weiss, who visited Saudi Arabia and then later became the representative of the Islamic state of Pakistan to the United States. He also was famous for his translation of the Quran and for his memoir *Road to Mecca* (1982), which has played a vital role in romanticizing Islamic religious conversion among westerners and presenting Saudi Arabia as an exotic land for believers; he also maintained a sense of being a western Muslim who, although he is Muslim, still adheres to what has been described as a western pride in reason (Hermansen, 1999).

On the other hand, Malcolm X was an African-American social rights activist whose story has played a role in the conversion of many African-Americans in the United States, including some of my informants. Malcolm was raised in an oppressive racist milieu in the 1930s and the 1940s; his oppressive difficult experience led him to become involved with the Nation of Islam, an African-American version of Islam that demonizes what they refer to as the white race and seeks black social rights to the extent of demanding a separate independent state for African-Americas. Malcolm was an active member in the Nation of Islam. Later on in his life, he travelled to some Islamic countries and to Mecca for *Hajj*. This journey resulted in Malcolm converting to Sunni Islam, which consequently led him to dissociate from and challenge the Nation of Islam. Like Assad, Malcolm also romanticized Saudi Arabia as the promised land of Muslims where racial differences were held to be wiped away (Haleys, 2007; Saldana-Portillo, 1997).

As has been argued above, conversion is very responsive to the context in which it occurs; it is constituted by individual life trajectories as well as the available meta-semiotic and meta-narrative resources (Jones, 2020). Converts invest in dominant stories of struggle and achievements to facilitate the enactment of their own conversion story. Specifically, converts find stories that are solidified in discourse available to them, which they are able to follow, conform with and sometimes resist while enacting their own conversion story. In other words, the stories of Mohammed Assad and Malcolm X can be viewed as meta-narratives that help converts to construct their own narratives. Both Assad and Malcolm shared similar backgrounds in coming from oppressed minorities in oppressive environments. Assad came from early twentieth century Germany with its antisemitic history, and Malcolm X was raised up in the United States with its racist policy against African-Americans. Both Assad and Malcolm X presented Islam as a source of empowerment against racial discrimination. Moreover, the latter does not only present a religious ideal for African-Americans, but he also represents what black manhood means in the American context (Jones, 2020). How we account for these meta-narratives, as well as psychological and sociocultural factors, contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of religious conversion.

2.3 Researching religious conversion

In the contemporary world, earlier religious conversion research was shaped by conflict between Christianity and secularism in the western world. Religiosity and religious knowledge had been subordinated by the secular during the flourishing of the age of Enlightenment and the discourses of modernity (Habermas, 2010). As a result, religious conversion was reduced to a psychological phenomenon in which

the subject is either presented as an agentive actor or a passive convert who experiences psychological tension that leads him/her to convert (Gooren, 2007; Rambo and Farhadian, 2014). These perspectives on religious conversion provided the premise for two apparently different approaches to religious conversion, which (as stated earlier) are labelled as bottom up and top down approaches. The first approach ascribes an agentive nature to the subjects, presenting them as free souls, seekers of truth and salvation. The second approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the social structures and institutions that lead to conversion. In this approach, converts are exposed to institutional powers that lead them to the point of converting (Gooren, 2007). In both approaches, researchers have been motivated to propose psychological models of the religious conversion process.

Although the present study views converts as strugglers who agentively construct their preferred conversion stories, it is of vital importance to understand the development of this perspective. In this section, I attempt to highlight some of the early research on religious conversion which appears representative of the two common perspectives of converts as either agentive actors or passive agents. I hope to illustrate how research into religious conversion has developed. In the following, the two studies reported are widely cited in the literature on religious conversion and are deemed to have made a major contribution to the field. These studies remind us of the two perspectives on identity construction which is discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Lofland and Stark (1965) investigated religious conversion among a small religious Christian group in the northwest of the United States. Adopting an ethnographic method, they collected data by observing and interviewing converts to a millenarian group. Although Lafland and Stark collected various data and attempted to document

their participants' lives, their analysis mainly refers to biographical data obtained either through interviews with their participants or through interviews with people who knew them. Influenced by James's (1902[1974]) notion of the free soul, they proposed seven 'predisposing conditions' (p. 86) underpinning religious conversion, which were the basis for their model of religious conversion. They started by proposing that there are conditions of pre-conversion which are in **tension** with the converts' surroundings and lives, which leads to assuming **types of problem-solving perspectives** (which could be religious, psychological, or political), and could lead to a **seekership** stage. Following this, they proposed conversion conditions which start with a **turning point** that is necessary for the subjects to commence the conversion. Then the convert comes to the point of exposition or a **cult affective bond**, which consequently leads to more involvement, or **extra-cult affective bonds,** and **intensive interaction** with the group. They affirmed that converts do not necessarily meet all these conditions in their conversion but would meet at least most of them.

Lofland and Stark presented their informants in this model as agentive subjects (This is where there bottom up perspective stems from) who psychologically struggled and attempted to overcome their crisis by seeking religious spirituality; they contended that this is not the necessary end for those in crisis. Conversion is possible for Lofland and Stark due to the possibility of a schism in the lives of converts. Because of its essentializing and reductionist view of conversion, their model has been widely criticised (Gooren, 2007; Peek, 2005). However, it lay the basis for models of religious conversion, and informed further attempts to develop models of religious conversion informed by psychology and biographical methods.

On the other hand, Long and Hadden (1983) argued that most religious conversion models adopt two different views of the conversion process, where socialization is a tacit factor. The first type of model is termed a **brainwashing** model, and the other is a **drift** model. In both models, socialization lays the foundation for conversion and contributes to the process of change. Long and Hadden argued that without better exploration of the role of socialization in the conversion process, it is not possible to understand why people convert to non-dominant religious cults. Hence, they proposed a definition of socialization as 'the social process of creating and incorporating new members of a group from a pool of non-members, carried out by members and their allies' (Long and Hadden, 1983, p.5). They explored religious conversion to the Unification Church (UC) by scrutinizing the socialization activities of members of the church with non-members: mainly young adults in the 1970s, which they describe as a time when conversion to this church flourished in the United States. Long and Hadden proposed a staged model of conversion, where the process starts with affiliating before moving to converting and confessing, and this leads to disaffiliation from a previous belief. In a broad sense, conversion differs according to the context, and converting to a major world religion is different from converting to a cult such as the Unification Church; however, the importance of Long and Hadden's (1983) model is the approach it takes to conversion which illustrates a top down approach. Accordingly, converts are presented as passive agents whose motivations for conversion, their life before conversion, and the context of conversion are all undermined and rarely explored. The present study adopts a contrary position to this approach as it emphasizes on the convert's agency.

As shown from the above discussion, early studies on religious conversion attempted to put forward conversion models that could be applied across religions,

aiming to unpack the factors motivating people to reach the point of conversion. However, the modelling of conversion processes is a shaping of a biographical story that is told to achieve discursive purposes rather than leading to a truthful or holistic representation of what so-called realities. Whether researchers present converts as agentive or passive, they are engaged with conversion stories generated from their experiences, rather than accessing the prior realities underlying it. Therefore, analysts, in my view, should be cautious about their claims about realities behind the narratives. In the following, I explore research on Islamic religious conversion in contemporary social science.

2.3.1 Researching Islamic religious conversion

The meaning of religious conversion varies across religions, and each religion has its own interpretation of the conversion circumstances (Rambo and Farhadian, 2014). In the following, I aim to provide an overview of the studies on Islamic religious conversion. However, beforehand, it is necessary to consider the apparent dilemma of researching Islam. It is pivotal for researchers to be aware that what comes to be endorsed as Islamic in their research process is a diverse category, and their informants have a role in ascribing their research as Islamic. It is also vital that researchers be aware of the fact that Islamic traditions are a historical sedimentation of social acts that appeared to be Islamic at a specific moment of history rather than essentializing these traditions (Assad, 2012). In this respect, Islam is an ongoing category that is historically produced and discursively constructed at any moment since its emergence. It is a category that is responsive to the social, political and even scientific context. It is charged for both locating similarities as well as differences among Muslims, and, at some moments, it works as an identity

preserving that emphasizes possible common identity of brotherhood which is in tension with contemporary secular world (Geertz, 1968). In the emerging scientific discourses of modernity, researching Islam is widely shaped by Eurocentric scientific traditions, which are affected by, and sometimes shaped by, the politics surrounding Islam within the contemporary West (Malik, 2004). Moreover, the complexity of religious belonging in a secular world, puts the categories that bounds religious belonging into question for its ability to find a space in contemporary West within the discourses of modernity, this can be seen in Steiner (1985) who argues that religious belonging (for Jews in Steiner's essay) is only in the text, putting religious belonging as an imagined narrative that has only space in the sacred text. This is relevant to researching Islamic religious conversion in this study as it will be illustrated in chapter 10. I feel this needs to be foregrounded before overviewing how Islamic conversion has been investigated.

In early twentieth century research on Islamic religious conversion, the focus was on mass conversion to medieval Islam. Again, how Islamic religious conversion was approached was informed by the tension between modernity and religiosity (Levtizion, 1979); religions were subordinated, and conversion was viewed as having a sociopolitical and psychological impetus, which could undermine any spiritual or individual explanations of conversion (Rambo, 1999). In the following, I provide an overview of some of the studies that attempted to understand Islamic religious conversion with more focus to the bottom up approach to conversion. First, I examine how researchers took a bottom up perspective to Islamic religious conversion. I then review studies focused on understanding the role of race in Islamic converts' stories. Following this, I turn to consider how gender is approached within research on Islamic conversion; I focus on race and gender because they are

relevant to the narratives investigated in my study. Finally, I examine how Islamic converts construct continuity in their stories of change.

A good example of the bottom up perspective to Islamic religious conversion is Kose (1996), who investigated the stories of male and female British converts to Islam. Adopting the psychological perspective of Lofland and Stark's (1965) model of religious conversion, Kose was mainly interested in the politics of Islam within the UK. He argued that there is still a place for being Muslim in the UK while maintaining Britishness: 'Converting to Islam does not necessarily mean excluding being English or British' (Kose, 1996, p.135). Adopting a bottom up perspective method helped him to answer his research question of why people convert. His data consisted of co-constructed stories enacted at a specific time to serve his informants' discursive purposes. Kose's work was pioneering in researching Islamic religious conversion in contemporary west, as his bottom up approach has informed many studies which have come after (Nieuwkirk, 2006; Ozyurek, 2014).

In addition, race has been a prevalent factor in researching Islamic religious conversion. There is an ongoing racialization of religions, particularly Islam in the West, so it is pivotal that researchers account for race as pertinent to conversion (Gaonnier, 2015 and Simmons, 2006). Galonnier (2015) investigated how Islam is racialized in the United States and France; she interviewed converts from both countries and tried to understand how they faced racial experiences in the areas where they lived. Galonnier argues that the converts' experiences of racism in their conversion were context relevant. That is to say, the meaning of Islam varies across the two countries; she also demonstrated that the way converts were stigmatized and victim to racial assaults reflected the difficult experiences they encountered in the United States and France. Ozyurek (2014) also reported similar experiences in

her research on German converts to Islam; she reported that converts were victims of racial assaults for being un-German or being viewed as a Turk or an Arab. This led some of them to adopt some practices so they would be viewed as different from Turks or Arabs and they tried to maintain or enact a kind of German Islamic identity.

Gender is also an important issue in Islamic conversion. Nieuwkirk (2006) argues that conversion is 'not only a momentary experience but an ongoing process of religious, social, and cultural transformation' (p.2); therefore, gender and the boundaries between being male and female are defined and rediscovered through the converts' life trajectories. Thus, gender has captured the attention of many scholarly works (Nieuwkirk, 2006; Sultan, 1999; Wohrab-Sahr, 2006); these researchers have been mainly oriented towards unpacking female experiences and informed by feminist traditions to understand what makes western women, mostly white middle class, convert to Islam. A good example of this is Nieuwkirk (2006), who compared the conversion stories of Dutch women. She collected these stories from her ethnographic research and online website dedicated to converts' testimonies. She found that the Islamic gender discourse that regulated gender, sexuality and family enabled women to construct a gender identity that resembles the notion of *Fṭrh*, which, according to their narratives, refers to the innate state that people are born with. It also helped them to construct femininity without being exposed to being a sexual object. Nieuwkirk noted in her comparison between the internet stories and the one elicited from research interviews that gender was only brought into the conversion stories when converts were asked about it; this is discussed further in section 2.3.2 of this chapter.

A rupture with the converts' past life experiences is another aspect of religious conversion and seems to be constitutive to how conversion is defined (Gooren,

2007; James, 1902 [1974]; Lofland and Stark 1965; Rambo 1999). However, many studies have attempted to rethink conversion as a way of **converting to continuity** (Gervers and Bikhazi, 1990; Meyer, 1998; Winchester, 2015). Continuity in religious conversion refers to the converts' redemption of their pre-conversion life meanings, which are represented continuously during their change of religion (Winchester, 2015). This seems to be pertinent to Islamic conversion and has been reported in studies on Islamic converts (Kose, 1996; Nieuwkirk, 2014; Ozyurek, 2014; Woodberrry, 1992). In fact, as stated earlier, the concept of converting to continuity is dominant within Islamic traditions, as these traditions argue that people are born submissive to God – this is the constituent element of Islamic faith, and that their upbringing changed their true being. Therefore, Islamic converts prefer to be called a 'revert' (as reported above) to emphasize their innate state of being submissive to God. Continuity is enacted at the moment of telling or reflecting about the converts' lives; it is a moment of redefining meaning that presents stability between how they see themselves before and after conversion. This can be achieved either by presenting themselves as acting like Muslims even before converting, which is reported by Nieuwkirk (2014) and Kose (1996), or by maintaining the disposition of their character before converting to Islam, viewing this as integral to their post-conversion identity. A good example of the latter can be found in Ozyurek (2014), who reported that one of her informants constructed his Muslim convert identity while maintaining his identity as German, which has at its core the tradition of enlightenment and reason. He presented himself as still German and Muslim, and his adherence to both Islam and German Enlightenment traditions had not been abandoned.

I have demonstrated some studies on Islamic religious conversion that reflect issues related to my research. In the next section, I present how the narrative method has been adopted in studies on religious conversion.

2.3.2 Narrative method for researching religious conversion

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the social sciences experienced what Riessmen (2008) called a narrative turn. Narrative started to attract the attention of social scientists in terms of a different way of researching social phenomena. As can be seen in the studies outlined above, narrative and stories seem to be central to researching religious conversion. Researchers are motivated to unpack the motivations for conversion, which has always been informed by collecting told experiences that constitute life events to formulate a conversion story. Although stories of conversion were prevalent in early research on conversion, the narrative method was rarely applied to analyse religious conversion (Lindgren, 2004; Rambo, 1999; Stromberg, 2014). In fact, there have been ongoing attempts to psychologize the conversion story (Lindgren, 2004), accounting for narrative as a coherent process that assumes a similar pattern in different people. This is challenged in the present study, and I would emphasize not only the diversity of the converts, but also the influence of narrativity on the construction of the conversion story. Before moving to my argument, I would like to focus on how narrative has been made relevant within scholarship on religious conversion. For instance, Rambo (1999) explored the relationship between conversion and narrative:

> In order to make sense of one's life, a narrative must be constructed or adopted. In some religions, the reconstruction of one's biography is a central element in the

converting process. Biographical reconstruction and the resulting narrative give new meaning to a person's definition of self, identity, relationships, and God (or some other comprehensive understanding of the world and life) (Rambo, 1999, p.265).

This implies that narrative is a goal in and of itself, that the lives of the converts are rethought to serve a discursive need to construct a story that seeks, in some ways, to construct a possible coherent meaningful conversion. That narrative is defined by the possibility of its telling, which revolves around an investigation into the narrator's identity. That is, conversion is only known when it is told; it is an experience of a possible set of events that we only learn about when it is told. More precisely, conversion narratives are told to an audience who co-construct them; their inquiry into a specific theme means that the story is possibly shaped according to a certain pattern – in the case of my research, that is religious conversion and its association with masculinity and race. The need to construct a conversion story positions the narrator as a convert, and from there the narrator starts to construct his/her story. This central theme of inquiry brings forth the possibility of similarity in conversion story patterns. It opens up discursive spaces where the convert inhabits and recounts events that are relevant the conversion processes. To clarify this, I would refer to Nieuwkirk (2006), who found that conversion stories obtained from interviews were heterogenous and attentive to their whole, and that they all shared a biographical structure pattern. On the other hand, internet narratives were less heterogenous and seemed to emphasize religious themes, while the biographical structure patterns were less frequent in these internet stories. Nieuwkirk argues that people are made to talk about what their audience want to hear. In her interviews, she was inquiring about religious conversion and why her informants had come to

convert; with the internet stories, the aim was to reflect on the religiosity of converts. This illustrates how narratives are made possible through what Lindgren (2004) called the endpoints the narrators wanted to achieve with their stories. This justifies why a specific theme can be meaningful such as gender or race; it comes into when it is been elicited or the narrator has been motivated to bring it.

Stromberg (2014) argues that in order to develop a narrative method for researching religious conversion, researchers should focus on converts' language; this offers the possibility of understanding the complexity of the converts' identity construction. In this perspective, the constituent themes incorporated to enact events that construct converts' life trajectories are all available through linguistic practices that not only constitute the narrative, but rather the social context in which these narratives are situated. Therefore, by telling stories, language constitutes relationships and experiences, and facilitates the narrator's narrative identities (Stromberg, 2014). Some religious conversion researchers have adopted a linguistic method to investigate converts' narratives by developing analytic lenses informed by traditions from linguistic inquiry (Lindgren, 2004; Snow and Machalek, 1983; Staple and Mauss, 1987; Stromberg, 1993). In the following, I review studies that appear relevant to my present work: Lindgren (2004) and Stromberg (1993).

In an attempt to understand how Muslim identity is constructed through means of narrative, Lindgren (2004) investigated the conversion story of a Swedish diplomat who moved late in his life to Morocco. Lindgren challenges the pervasive psychological approach to religious conversion, contending that the '"psychologization' of our behaviour is narrated' (p.69). Therefore, he adopted a narrative strategy that aimed to trigger narrative about an endpoint, which is religious conversion. His motivation was to understand how such a narrative is constructed by

incorporating life events to construct a social identity, a universal one that brought about a Muslim identity to the moment of telling. Lindgren argued that converts bring in certain events from their lives and make them appear coherent in order to construct a Muslim identity in a postmodern society. He also argued that a particular social identity stimulates the universal in order to be meaningful. This notion of social and universal is reminiscent of the performative concepts of conformity (Loxley, 2007) or brought about and brought along identities (Baynham, 2014); brought about identities are constructed within the discourses of dominant identities, and the more they conform with the dominant identities- or the brought along, the more intelligible they appear.

Another important study that applied a linguistic method to investigate religious conversion narrative is Stromberg (1993), who investigated narratives from Evangelical converts in the United States, aiming to explore how a narrative is not only a set of events that reflects a story, but is a ritual that enables converts to make sense of their conversion. Stromberg argues about the performative nature of narrative, where only events that enable converts to make sense of their conversion are reported. He argues that by scrutinizing the linguistic practices that constitute the narratives and their context, researchers are able to gain insight into the construction of the converts' sense of who they are; this is enacted every time the story is retold in possibly dissimilar patterns. He emphasized that there is a common feature of what James (1902 [1974]) called tension, and that the converts draw on a conflict resolution strategy to overcome that tension.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the development of the field of religious conversion. I've also looked into the phenomenon of Islamic religious conversion. Then I have outlined some empirical works that explore Islamic religious conversion. Finally, I have shed light on the narrative method for researching religious conversion. In the next chapter, I introduce the theoretical frameworks of performativity that inform my empirical research.

Chapter 3: Performativity and Gender Identity

3.1 Introduction

Having introduced the literature on religious conversion, this chapter outlines the

theoretical framework adopted to investigate the converts' narratives, in which I aim

to illustrate how I take the bottom up perspective to religious conversion that is

proposed by Lofland and Stark (1965). I find performativity a useful theoretical frame

to build on the bottom up perspective. In this chapter, I begin by outlining the

development of the study of identity and language across fields, focusing in

particular on how views have shifted since the emergence of poststructuralism. I

introduce the notion of identity construction, followed by setting out the development

of performativity and how it was applied by Butler (1990, 1997). After that, I review

how performativity has been empirically applied, focusing on how agency,

positioning and linguistic analysis have been studied in the investigation of identity

construction in narratives.

3.2 Language and identity

Research on identity reflects many aspects of the development of human

intellectuality. Inquiry into notions pertinent to identity have been central to treatises

which amplify how questions involving 'who' have shaped our understanding of

ourselves. Ego, psyche, self and the subject are all etymologies coined in different

disciplines, yet the core of these notions is integral to the question of who we, he,

she, they or I are. Whether the central claim of the inquiry relies on internal

properties that determine the human subject (e.g., biological or psychological), or

sociocultural factors, the centrality of the 'who' question is still rooted in the inquiry

(Bamberg, 2011; Bock, 2005). While this inquiry extends across different disciplines,

such as philosophy, anthropology, sociology and psychology, the role of language is

pivotal to how identity has been investigated. Moreover, as with the inquiry into

identity, the relation between language and identity is complex. In fact, language has

been pivotal in defining identity. A good example of how identity and language are

intertwined can be seen in the emergence of nation states in Europe following the

Westphalia treaty in the early seventeenth century, which witnessed a complex

standardization of speech and this led to the emergence of certain varieties as

standard languages in the newly formed nation states and contributed significantly to

the formation of ethnic identities all over Europe (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004; Joseph,

1987).

This process of standardization and marking speech communities with ethnic labels

led to a parallel politicization of cultural sameness and differences in modernity,

which was essentialized (nationhood, culture, standard language, gender... etc). In

fact, the word itself 'identity' is politically charged, as it is derived from the Latin root

'idem', which means the same (Madsen,2016); this entails defining boundaries of an

ingroup (the same) and an outgroup (different) (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004).

Academically, this essential view was less problematised until the so-called

poststructuralist turn that redefined the relation between language and identity. Hall

(1996) argues that in 'our post-modern world, we are also "post" any fixed or

essentialist conception of identity ˍsomething which, since the Enlightenment, has

been taken to define the very core or essence of our being, and to ground our existence as human subjects' (Hall, 1996: p.597). Consequently, the essentialist view of language as an entity that determined culture shifted to one where language is constituted by cultural and political meaning (Blommaert, 2010; Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). This redefining of the role of language in identity construction has led to what has been so-called the linguistic turn in social science, in which researching social phenomena involves a specific focus on language as a means of communication that shapes and is shaped by social situations (Carter, 2013). Language has been used in various ways in the investigation of identity: either as an analytical lens or a space in which social phenomena are explored (Carter, 2013; Riessmen, 2008).

This leads to another complexity: the relation between language and the subject, and how this contributes to identity construction. This has been explored in different ways with different emphases on the role of language. In the present study the subject is understood as the discursive processes that take social actors into being (Foucault, 1982). Accordingly, Du Gay, Evan and Redman (2005) have argued that there are three different positions regarding how the subject is positioned in relation to language and identity construction. First, the subject as a 'subject of language' refers to various social discourses that are shaped by and shape language in the construction of the subject; second, the 'subject' can be viewed as an abstract entity that exists prior to discourse either as a psyche or an anatomical entity; third, the subject is explored in terms of its historical and cultural situatedness. Each of these paradigms represents a different school of thought: French poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and the sociological method, respectively. These paradigms may, at some moments, contest each other, while at other times they are not very distinct from each other. Du Gay, Evan and Redman (2005) argued that the first position is

more informed by a philosophical inquiry of identity, in which the social world emanates from moral social subjects who are discursively enacting their existence. Considering that the present study adopts a performative perspective towards identity, it is possible to position it within the first paradigm. This presents a challenge since it attempts to adopt a philosophical exploitation of identity that is not widely empirically informed (Loxley, 2007); however, I hope that the analytical model developed in the present study adds empirical data to this paradigm. The next section provides an overview of identity construction and how performativity was expanded within this domain.

3.3 Identity construction and performativity

Under the previously dominant structuralist view of the social sciences, identity was viewed as constituting an essence, something that hierarchically exists prior to social interaction. Social categories were viewed as fixed and stable, with social actors inheriting these categories. In other words, the human subject is exposed (or imposed in a radical sense) to social structure, which shapes who the subject is. This means that gender, ethnicity, race and sexuality exist prior to the human subject, and the subject inhabits them. Most of the time, the social structure takes the form of a binary system, such as male or female, or black or white. However, in the last three decades of the twentieth century, there was a huge debate about the nature of social structure, which led to the essentialist view of identity being questioned. This debate, associated with theorists such as Derrida and Foucault, has led to the emergence of philosophical trends which collectively come under the broad umbrella of poststructuralism. Poststructuralists started to question social structures and the static view of social phenomena; identity is at the centre of this discussion. The

essences, which were viewed as existing prior to human agency, have been defined by poststructuralists to be the very product of the subject. Social categories such as race, gender and ethnicity have started to be viewed as socially constructed norms rather than fixed entities. Therefore, identity is ongoing; it keeps moving and is fluid, sometimes in an incoherent manner (Block, 2005; Joseph, 2010). What is salient in a certain position may not be so in another (Block, 2005; Butler, 1990), and language within this domain locates social actors differently based on their language use. In this sense, language is not just a tool; it is a space in which social subjects project themselves and contest in social phenomena through different discourses (Blommaert, 2010).

The constructivist perspective has diverse positions regarding the notion of identity construction. Researchers aim to explore two levels of construction that are "The microlevel of the individual and the macrolevel of the social order" (Preece, 2016: p.3). Moreover, Baxter (2016) has argued that within the constructivist view of identity construction, researchers and theorists have developed different positions from micro to the macro and from more stable to fluid. The approach from the macro to the micro is usually referred to as the top down approach, whereas the micro to the macro is the bottom up (Bamberg, 2004b). Within the bottom up approach there are different positions to the stability of the social orders. Some scholars, such as Davies and Harre (1990) in their theory of positioning, place more emphasis on the availability of the positions taken by the subject, which suggests that they are more stable. On the contrary, Butlerian performativity (Butler, 1990, 1997) emphasizes the complex construction of a politicized subject that is performatively and discursively

enacted and reciprocally enacts their[3] social being. For the latter, the identity is more fluid and ongoing, it is never stable. This latter position towards identity construction is adopted as a theoretical framework in my study, and I argue that this position enables me to have an in-depth bottom up perspective to researching religious conversion. In the next section, I provide an overview of the development of the notion of performativity within the traditions of linguistic inquiry and illustrate the rationale behind adopting it as a theoretical framework in my investigation of the religious convert narratives.

3.3.1 Performativity

Butler (1990) has argued that identity is 'performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (p.34). We understand ourselves and make sense of who we are by labels such as male, white, heterosexual and so on. These labels or categories are products of identity construction rather than being essences that discursively exist prior to the subject (Butler, 1990). This performative definition of identity is adopted in the present study. In the following discussion, I will trace the genealogy of the term performativity and consider how it evolved into the emergence of the radical critique of feminist politics in Butler's work; this is followed by a review of empirical attempts at applying performativity when researching gender identity in the social sciences.

Performativity is a term that can be traced back to the Italian novelist Luigi Pirandello, who used the term to refer to identity construction in his novel One, No

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[3] I have used the pronoun 'their' here, aiming to refer to a hypothetical genderless subject.

One & One Hundred Thousand (Pirandello, 2018). For Pirandello, identity has social

meanings that are discursively enacted through our daily life encounter. What is

interesting in his account, is that the body too can be made through different system

of representation and conceptualization. However, Anglo-American academia widely

roots the term to the theoretical work of the American linguist and philosopher John

Austin in his work *How to Do Things with Words*, based on lectures that he delivered

at Harvard University in the 1960s. Building on the emergence of the analytical

philosophy traditions in the post–Second World War period, and the wide exploitation

of 'ordinary language' (Wittgenstein, 2009 [1953]), Austin sought to explore what can

be termed situated social realities, and how these are constituted by linguistic acts

(Morris, 2017). For Austin (1975), language can do more than describe social

actions; rather, it constitutes actions and creates its social existence. Hence, he

produced the taxonomy of 'speech acts' consisting of two categories: constative and

performative utterances. Austin argued that the first category refers to utterances

that describe an event or an action. This means that utterances do not create the

event but just report it. The second category, which he termed performative, refers to

the linguistic utterances that constitute and perform an event. In other words, an

utterance entails an action that has an effect and constitutes realities. This can be

illustrated by the wedding ceremony example, which is widely cited to illustrate

Austin's concept of performative acts. In his lecture, Austin argued that in the

wedding rites in the Christian faith, the groom responds to the priest's question about

his acceptance of marrying the bride. The groom's response of "I do" creates the

event of the bride becoming his wife. In other words, this declarative act creates an

event and is a performance on its own. Austin contends that performative acts are

linked to the context and the social structure and are constrained by the historical

and social meanings of their occurrence. They can only be felicitous (happy) if they conform with these historical and social meanings. If they fail to conform, then they end up infelicitous (unhappy). In other words, performative utterances, in order to be successful, should be uttered by the right interlocutor in the right context; if they are not, they risk failure and being unhappy (Austin, 1975). However, this distinction between performative and constative acts is to some extent blurred, especially given that Austin based that distinction on the ability of performative acts to do something or to create reality. This opens up a possible argument that even when uttering constative acts there is an implicit performative effect, or locutionary force, whether it is intended or not by the interlocutor (Felman, 1983). This was admitted by Austin himself when he tried to draw on the differences between performative and constative acts in the fifth lecture in *How to Do Things with Words* (1975). He raised doubts about the distinction between the two as he thought that even constative acts may have some performative influence.

Austin's work on ordinary language contributes to linguistic inquiry and the emergence of a particular strand of linguistics as a field of study in the 1960s and the 1970s. It also has led to a wider expansion of language as a constituent of social realities (Joseph, Love and Taylor, 2001); other scholars have analysed his argument and criticized it. Of particular relevance is the critique of his speech act theory by the French poststructuralist philosopher Derrida. I intend to briefly review Derrida's critique because it has contributed to Butler's thoughts on performativity. Derrida (1988a), in his article 'Signature Event Context', tried to deconstruct Austin's performativity and problematize the deterministic view of a performative utterance and its pertinence to the context. According to Derrida, Austin's succession condition of the performative act is constrained by the context and the intentionality of the

interlocutor; and his notion of failure utterances is problematic. In fact, failure

utterances are particularly relevant to Derrida's critique.

Derrida's critique challenges Austin's deterministic view of meaning as stipulated by

the context, in which the context and intentionality exist prior to the utterance and

constrain it. In contrast, for Derrida, the context and intentionality are historized and

constituted by the acts that are understood to follow them (Salih, 2002). Derrida

based his critique of Austin on his notion of difference and deferral, which refers to

the meaning of a sign as not only stemming from its difference from other signs, but

its possibility and ability to defer meaning and constitute difference; this is bound to a

historical accumulation of reiteration of events. Therefore, for Derrida, utterances are

possible recitations of previous events, and this ongoing recitationality constitutes

meaning and any possible deferral and subversion (Derrida, 1988b, 1987). Derrida

argued that any possible failure utterances open up new possibilities of subversion.

This makes the binary of felicitous/infelicitous utterances problematic, as he argued

that Austin had considered the conventionality that constitutes the '*circumstance* of

the utterance' (Derrida, 1988a: p.15). Although Austin argued that the failure

utterance may affect the 'totality of the conventional acts' (p.15), he undermined its

effect on the law that governs the context. Accordingly, Derrida argues that the

possibility of failure could congeal and possibly form subversive discourses/events

(Derrida, 1988a). This can be illustrated by referring to Austin's wedding ceremony

example of the groom's vows; I assumed that the wedding is between heterosexual

partners – a male and female. However, I will set out the following situation: where

this utterance was made by a man to a man or between homosexual partners in the

early twenty-first century, or in a space where same-sex marriage is not permitted by

religious institutions or the state. This may be considered an infelicitous act and

could not match the context in Austin's sense. However, for Derrida, this utterance may be recited, influence the law and, possibly, congeal and open up the possibilities of subversive selves.

Derrida's critique of Austin's speech acts theory later brought pivotal ideas to the development of performativity: citationality and reiterability. Derrida argues that every event is open to the possibility of reciting and re-iterating another event. That is to say, signs are ongoing recitations and reiterations of preceding events with a possible difference and ongoing deferral. This can be seen in the hypothetical example of homosexual marriage above. The meanings enacted in the ceremony are recitations of historical ones with a difference that opens the possibilities of deferral. This may congeal, appropriate and dominate discourse in which the possibility for subversion emerges (Derrida, 1988b). Hence for Derrida, as stated earlier, meaning is a situated operation of signs at a particular moment of time in which signs obtain their meaning not just from their differences from other signs, but from their possible deferral (Derrida, 1987). This means that linguistic acts, or any social acts, are historized and attentive to the context.

3.3.1.1 Butlerian performativity and gender identity

The development of the notion of performativity has been a layer of the critique of feminist politics, initiated by the language philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 1997). Butler criticizes the feminist essentialization of a hegemonic women or females' identity and struggle; she has expanded this to interrogate the ramifications of life in general by questioning the genetic and biological determinations of social beings (Baxter, 2016; Butler, 1990; Loxley, 2006). Butler argues that the bodies (or perhaps more accurately the meanings that are

ascribed to bodies) that constrain our social beings are enacted by performative

acts, and that our bodies are the effects of these acts. This is where Butler meets

Austin's (1975) speech acts theory, in the sense that the performative acts are the

illocutionary forces and people's bodies are their effects. Butler (1990) argues that

from the moment of birth, bodies, once they exist, are gendered through repeated

acts that recite and re-iterate a socially inscribed perception of how gender is socially

presumed. This reminds us of Pirandello's concept that bodies are constantly being

made. Butler goes even further to widen her understanding of performative acts to

be explanatory to the complex interplay between discursivity and materiality for

constituting the subject and its social existence (Nayar, 2018).

Butler views gender as 'the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts

within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the

appearance of substance of a natural sort of being' (Butler, 1990, p.25). These

repeated acts resemble Derrida's notions of recitation and reiteration in which he

argues that each act is a recitation and reiteration of a previous one with possible

deference. Therefore, she argues that women comprise an ongoing subject; a

woman is a being that is performatively enacted to conform with cultural inscriptions:

'woman is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot be rightfully

said to originate or to end' (Butler, 1990, p.45). For Butler, the gendered and sexed

dichotomies of the body, which are held to be biologically and genetically informed

from an essentialist perspective, are an accumulation of ongoing discursive

gendering and sexualization of the subject, which are not only a product of law that

governs discourse, but discursive effects that produce the law itself. This leads

Butler to question both gender and sexuality as well as desire, as effects of an

ongoing stylization of the subject:

The notion that there might be a "truth" of sex, as Foucault ironically termed it, is produced precisely through the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms. The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical opposition between "feminine" and "masculine," where these are understood as expressive attributes of "male" and "female." The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of "identities" cannot "exist" – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not "follow" from their sex or gender. (Butler, 1990, p. 23–24)

In this quotation, Butler illustrates the ongoing regulation of a coherent heterosexual law that regulates the conformity between heteronormative gender, sex and desires. For Butler, there is an ongoing exploitation of gender that follows heteronormative sexuality and desire, where patriarchal structure is normalized and inscribed in pre-cultural biological bodies. Yet, as Butler argues (1990, 1997), these very biological presuppositions are culturally constrained. Indeed, Butler argues that our corporeal inquiry regarding the biological exploitation of our bodies is shaped by identity politics that constitute and stipulate possible ontologies. Therefore, for Butler, culture is a complex formation of social realities that produces prevailing possibilities of selves, which permit social acceptance. All these possibilities only come to exist through performative acts, and gender apparently becomes 'real only to the extent it is performed' (Butler, 1990, p.278). In other words, identity 'is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (1990, p.34). This ongoing performative enactment of identities does not exactly conform with the cultural and historical inscriptions of who we are. Indeed, there are always

possibilities of deferral and subversion. This suggests that performativity aims to interrogate the ongoing normalization of gender, sex and desire discourses that appear to be settled in identity (Loxley, 2007; Salih, 2002).

Building on Butler, there has been a shift in how gender identity is exploited in social sciences, researchers across fields have overcome the dilemma of viewing gender as natural and stable and that it follows sex, whereas sex follows reproduction and anatomy. This deterministic natural perception of sex and gender with a biological emphasis has been understood to be social construction (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Moreover, masculinity cannot be viewed as a fixed entity, indeed, like femininity, it is fluid and not coherent. It also reflects social institutions, where social actors are positioned (Connell, 2005). Coates (2003) argues that while there is a hegemonic masculinity that is associated with authority, toughness, heterosexuality, and competitiveness, there are always subordinated forms of masculinity that do not conform with these. Kiesling (2007), writing about masculinity in western cultures (and perhaps by extension masculinity more generally), argues that four cultural discourses are prevalent in what he calls hegemonic masculinity; these are gender differences, heterosexism, dominance, and male solidarity. The latter corresponds to men's need to engage in activities with groups of other men, excluding women and has been described by Sedgwick (1985) as homosociality. The homosocial practice that comes into men's talk stabilizes the four cultural discourses that are associated with hegemonic masculinity and contributes to the marginalization of women (Kiesling, 2007; 2005). As will become apparent in the analysis chapters, all of these are present in the informants' narratives and their interaction with me as the researcher. These masculine acts, which are historical and possibly evolved and followed from the more historical patriarchal and religious structures, are contextual

and are not always coherent, especially within postmodern selves (Connell, 2005; Seidler, 1996). Hence, masculinity is the performative enactment of domination that recites and possibly defers from patriarchy and is constituted by power relations at the discursive moment.

In all above, I have set out the development of performativity and how it is contributed by identity construction. But, as stated earlier in this chapter, this performative perspective towards identity construction is problematic for doing empirical work since it was only developed within philosophical traditions in its early stages and was not widely investigated within empirical traditions (Loxley, 2006). In the next section, I overview the empirical work on masculinity and race from the performative perspective.

3.3.2 Performativity and researching masculine identity in narratives

As has already been mentioned, performativity has developed and thrived within the traditions of language philosophy and attempts at exploring ordinary language. McNay (1999) argues that the dilemma in performativity is its abstractness regarding the 'subject formation'. It lacks empirical investigation and mainly incorporates hypothetical social situations. However, among the earliest attempts to incorporate performativity into the investigation of identity, particularly gender, within the field of sociolinguistics and discursive psychology is the attempt of Cameron (1997) who has tried to use conversational analysis to investigate how men enacted hegemonic masculinity in informal talks. Her method has been viewed as still entangled with the problem of CA views of linguistic acts as essences that reflects social structures and not constituting these structures (McIlvenny, 2002) In McIlvenny's edited volume, *Talking Gender and Sexuality* (McIlvenny (2002), the contributors argue in alignment

with Butler that gender regulates sex through the constitution of culturally inscribed

bodies which shape what, for some, is held to be natural and biological. Hence,

normativity constitutes historical subject positions and regulates how social actors

position themselves accordingly. To unpack the complexity of identity construction,

they argued that an in-depth analysis of social acts is needed, especially the

linguistic ones (Speer and Potter, 2002). Methodologically, they have argued that

traditional conversational analysis tends to essentialize subject positions at the

interactional level by reducing them to referential entities that are fixed and

deterministic (McIlvenny, 2002; Speer and Potter, 2002). Therefore, they proposed

the 'discursive psychological method' in linguistic analysis, in which they blended two

different schools of linguistic analysis: conversational analysis and critical discourse

analysis. They argue that this would place epistemic emphasis on the agency of the

subject in identity construction. Discursive psychologists aim to focus on 'the

speakers' own construction of what is important and consequential as primary'

(Speer and Potter, 2002, p.159). This is accomplished by taking a Foucauldian

critical discourse analysis approach that is informed by CA to analyze identity

construction in interactional settings. In the next section, I place race within

performative perspective.

3.3.3 Performativity and researching race

While there are differences in human skin colours, these differences have been

charged with socially constructed views of what it means to be black, white, brown,

and so on; in this regard, race is a trope, and only becomes real when is performed

(Thompson, 2003). It is an interpretive social meaning of biologically stabilized

differences; these social meanings are shaped by socio-political norms in which race

emerges as a borderline for difference and sameness (Alexander, 2004).

However, the category of race is never fixed; it evolves as new meanings and representations emerge socially (Hall, 1997). There have been various trends and paradigms in social science that aim to investigate racial identities and are influenced by identity politics surrounding racial discourses and discrimination against people of African descent; this can be seen in Critical Race Theory and what follows it, such as intersectionality (Collins, 2000; 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). (Hall, 1993; 1997; 2006). In this section, I intend to situate race within the context of performativity theory. The goal of this section is to show how being black is more than just a skin difference; it is a performative enactment of blackness.

The performative view on race considers it as the performative enactment of racial belonging; it is the stylization of the subject through discursive and bodily practices that cause the subject to appear as though of a particular race. Race is represented by skin colour in the same way that gender is represented by phallus symbolism. That is to say, while race has biological and naturalistic attributes, it is the political and social milieu that has formed the substance of race, not the other way around. Race is a constructed term that has emerged as a result of the politics of modernity and the othering of non-white subjects, particularly in North America. In his reflective article on passing as a black man, Alexander (2004), claims that being a black man is performative, that it is a construction made possible through various performative practices that are charged with cultural membership; being a black man entails embodying black masculinity that is driven by its existence in parallel with the white man, Alexander (2004) aims to establish an account of an integrative ethnography of the performance of black masculinity that encompasses the critique of the performance as a component of the total textual portrayal of an experience of

performing black masculinity. Accordingly, passing as black is not only susceptible to being intelligible for Black People, but it is also susceptible to being perceived as so even by white people. Bodies poised at the intersection of geographical and social boundaries within what is socially constructed as a border between being black and not. These boundaries are a sedimentation of social meanings of being, with which social subjects become entangled as they make sense of themselves as black masculine (Alexander, 2004). As a result, race is shaped by racism, which identifies and attributes superiority or inferiority to people based on their skin colour (Hall, 1997). As will be demonstrated in the analysis and discussion chapters, the concept of race as performative is pertinent to the current study. In the next section, I go over some of the empirical investigations into identity and gender that have been conducted using performativity theory. I discuss how these investigations engaged with concepts such as agency, positioning, and language that are consistent with the Butlerian performative perspective.

3.3.4 Performativity and researching agency

Poststructuralists have drawn much attention to agency when seeking to understand identity construction (Gray and Morton, 2018); the concept of performativity can be considered even more radical due to the focus it brings to the agency of social actors. That is to say, it tries to explore the agency of social actors and how agency is complexly intertwined with the social context in constructing the identity/ies that emerge in discourse (Bamberg, 2004a; Block, 2005; 2012; McIlvenny, 2002; Speer and Potter, 2002). Agency can be generally defined as the ability of social actors to act (Ahearn, 2001). This notion has been expanded by Duranti (2004) who argues that agency is a characteristic of social entities that have some control over their own

actions. Their actions in the world have an impact on other social entities, as well as their own; their actions are also at stake of evaluation. However, agency is problematic and not straightforward for Butler (1990), as she argues that personhood has been reduced to the notion of agency in the sociological method, which suggests that there is a metaphorical self that occupies who we are in our pre-discursive existence. In contrast, Butler (1990) contends that there is no doer behind the deed: the deeds (the acts) are everything. Therefore, agency cannot be defined via an 'I' that exists prior to social acts. Agency 'is reformulated as a question of how signification and resignification work' (Butler, 1990, p.197). In other words, agency is a historically situated 'I' that is engaged in the discursive enactment of its own existence; to investigate this social actor is 'to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life' (Butler, 1990, p.198). This suggests that the inquiry of identity should be oriented towards performative acts, while accounting for the historical and contextual settings which constitute the social subjects. In other words, agency can be defined as situated performative social acts that make the subject emerge in discourse as a social actor.

Building on the above literature on agency, Bamberg (2005) argued that in order to situate and explore the social subject, it is vital to investigate the linguistic agency that made the subject a moral person, who conforms, resists and subverts master narratives which are more dominant in discourse. This linguistic agency corresponds 'to the linguistic marking of different perspectives in which represented characters are viewed as relating to objects and to other characters in the (represented) world' (Bamberg, 2005, p.1). In other words, personhood is constituted via linguistic acts that construct subjects' positions, where moral stances are taken up, and where

alignment, sameness and differences are constructed (Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). Bamberg proposed a narrative analysis method, which he argued would enable the researcher to investigate the social enactment of identity in narratives; he referred to this as narrative analysis steps (refer to section 4.4.3.1.2 Chapter 4 for more details). In Bamberg's extensive work on identity in narrative (Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2019), agency is constituted through the linguistic choices made by social actors in interactional settings, where they enact positions for themselves and their characters in their story worlds. These positions inform us about what identities they construct for themselves, and these enacted identities can be viewed as a window that allows us to learn about the more dominant identities or the master narratives – those that are culturally intelligible, in Butler's words. Bamberg (2004a) launched his analysis method by investigating how young adolescent males (15-year-old boys) enacted their gender identity in a conversational research setting that generated co-constructed narratives about a girl in their class. Bamber reported that these boys drew on different linguistic acts that constructed positions for characters in their story world, where men's or boys' expression of their sexuality was normalized and naturalized, and that females were constructed as not; this cultural enactment of sexuality was brought as natural facts that were normalized in the boys' narrative. The boys' agency stems from the linguistic practices they invested in constructing their story world, in which they agentively enacted their sense of manhood.

3.3.5 Positions and performative gender identity construction

Bamberg's extensive work on positioning contributed to the idea of how narrative is a productive site for examining the performative enactment of identity. However, he

argued that his analysis method aims to bridge the gap between the two ends of the argument on identity construction. The first sees identity, and more particularly positions, as existing prior to social subjects, which can be seen in Davies and Harre's (1990) work on positioning. The second, which is more radical, argues that the deeds are a constituent of the positions and the subjects that take up these positions; this is presented in Butler's (1990) work on identity. According to Bamberg, the first suggests that the subjects are less agentive in the process of constructing the already existing positions, while the second argues for an agentive role for the subject in enacting these positions. For Bamberg the analysis steps he proposed would make it possible for the analyst to examine both how positions are taken up and how they are enacted (Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

This analytic model was revisited by Baynham (2014) in his work on the Moroccan immigrant narrative in the UK. Baynham argues that social subjects' agency stems from subjectivity, and that subjectivity is constituted by situated linguistic acts; these acts allow the subject to emerge in interactions. He contends that there should be more focus on the speaking subject at the moment of interactions in order to historicize the dynamics of identity work in interaction. Building on Zimmerman's (1998) notion of contextual identity, Baynham contends that positions are enacted at the interactional level to construct two dimensions of identity, which are identity brought about and identity brought along. He also aligns with Georgakopoulou (2007) on the performative natures of stories; that is to say, stories ought to be historicized to have in-depth analytic exploitations of identity constructions at the moment of interaction. In this sense, stories are reiterative and recitational, and historicizing identity work at the moment of interaction enables the analyst to unpack the emergence of identities in narrative. Therefore, Baynham argues that narrative is

a privileged site where identities are enacted, contested and subverted. It is through the repetitions of the acts, the stories or events that are congealed and more dominant in discourse to be enacted along. Following Bamberg, Baynham (2014) started his analysis with an emphasis on linguistic subjectivity, accounting for the linguistic practices that constitute the narrative. Through these linguistic practices (for more details refer to section 4.5.3.2.1, Chapter 4), positions are constructed through stance taking and alignment. Baynham's work places more attention on the bottom up perspective regarding identity construction and describes the dynamics of identity construction from the micro (brought about) to the macro (brought along) without claiming a midway point between the two, as is the case in Bamberg's model. The next section overviews the type of linguistic analysis adopted in the present study.

3.3.6 Linguistic practices as performative acts

As has been demonstrated so far, the role of language is pivotal in identity construction, especially in stance taking (stance taking is explored more in chapter 4 section 4.4.3.1.1). However, it has been viewed in different ways: either as a pre-existing entity that is saturated with pragmatic and semantic meanings (Davies and Harre, 1990; Ochs, 1999, 2004), and is available for social actors who use these entities to enact their identity; or as a construct of what follows it and a constituent of culturally intelligible subjects (Baxter, 2014; Butler, 1990, 1997). The first view reflects the top down approach to identity construction, while the second exemplifies the bottom up approach. Since the present study adopts a Butlerian perspective towards identity construction which takes a bottom up perspective, I focus more on the second view in this section. Butler (1990) argued that the notion of language is a

complex entity that has dual functions. First, language is a product of power relations; that is to say, it reflects the Foucauldian notion of the 'before law' (Foucault, 1982) which constrains meanings and cultural intelligibility. Second, language and linguistic practices are performatively constituting the 'after', and the subject, as well as reenacting the law and making it congeal through what is linguistically permitted. This does not suggest that there is any pre-discursive existence; indeed, this line of argument advocates the discursive production of language itself. In other words, language is constituted by congealed acts that are made dominant by the powerful actors at a specific moment of time, and they become politicized, reflecting power relations in discourse. This means that the role of conversation is to determine social actors' social existence, in which by saying things they do their beings (Gee, 2014). These interactional processes accumulate into a possible emergence of speech communities, which Rampton (1998) defined as the shared common use of language. Understanding these communities requires investigation of the micro level of interaction, where social actors are engaged in linguistic practices in order to make sense of the world around them (Rampton, 2006).

For both Bamberg and Baynham, linguistic practices are pivotal to identity construction. Linguistic practices are rich sites that enable analysts to understand identity work in narratives. More particularly, positions are made, taken and resisted through the linguistic choices made by social actors at moments of discourse (De Fina, 2003). However, there are different ways of doing linguistic analysis; each aspect and perspective to identity requires analysts to consider a different focus on linguistic practices (Reissman, 2008). That is to say, linguistic elements are charged with many social meanings. These meanings are historicized in language

(Blommaert, 2005; Du Bois, 1986; Duranti, 2004). This exploitation of the social meaning of language has led to extensive literature from different fields on doing linguistic analysis of identity work in narratives (Baynham, 2014; Bamberg, 2004a; Du Bois, 1987; Coates, 1987; Gray and Baynham, 2020; Gray and Morton, 2018; De Fina, 2003; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2011; Gee, 2014; Labove, 1972; Labov and Waletzky, 1997; Riessman, 2008). Understanding identity work in narratives requires understanding how positions are enacted, this requires an unpacking of how stances, alignment and resistance are taken up in narratives (Kayi-Aydar, 2018; Baynham, 2014; Bamberg, 2004a; Gee, 2014; De Fina, 2003, Englebretson, 2007; Riessman, 2002). In the present study, alongside the work in discursive psychology (Bamberg, 2004) and sociolinguistics (Baynham, 2014), I have also drawn on the literature that mainly comes from linguistic anthropology (Du Bois, 2007; De Fina, 2003, 1995; Duranti, 1994; Englebretson, 2007; Hill and Irvine, 1992; Hill and Zepeda, 1992) and discourse analysis (Halliday, 1985; Narrog, 2012). The discursive method used to investigate identity within this body of literature provided a detailed linguistic method that enabled me to understand how identity is constructed in interaction. In particular, it focuses on the agentive exploitation of the subject and how this stems from linguistic choices invested in at the moment of interaction. Within these traditions, agency stems from the social actors who are morally responsible for the talk, and that responsibility emanates from the grammatical options made use of by the social actors at the moment of interaction (Duranti, 1994; Hill and Irvine, 1992). Practices such as reported speech (De Fina, 2003; Hill and Zepede, 1992, Besnier, 1992) and pronominal choices (De Fina, 2003, 1995) (for more details on the linguistic analysis, refer to section 4.4.3.2.1, Chapter 4) are pertinent to how the social actors construct their narratives and project their agency.

Duranti (1994) argue that what is central to linguistic analysis is the fact that linguistic practices are integral to crafting social realities, and hence collective memories where social subjects agentively insert themselves into discourse as morally responsible with different levels of responsibility.

In the above, I have provided an overview of the empirical work from discursive psychologists, sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologist, who take a bottom up perspective towards identity construction. Each of these fields establishes itself with some emphasis on its distinctiveness from other fields when it comes to how language and identity are investigated. However, it seems that there are blurred boundaries between them, and that they are all informed by a discursive method towards studying identity construction that views language as central and part of the discursive practices that shape social realities. Therefore, I have come to adopt a multidisciplinary position which attempts to incorporate literature on linguistic analysis across fields in order to develop a method of analysis for studying identity construction, which I have termed performative narrative analysis. This is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shed light on the development of research into language and identity with a particular focus on performativity. I have reviewed how performativity has been adopted when conducting empirical investigations of identity in narratives. Also, I have demonstrated how this has been investigated among different, but rather closely related, fields: linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis. In the next chapter, I set out my methodology for conducting the empirical research, in which I provide more details about my analytical method.

Chapter 4: Research Design

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I set out the research design. The chapter begins by describing the philosophical frame of the research design, setting out my understanding of qualitative research and narrative inquiry with reference to the related literature. This is followed by the research questions of my study. I then present the research design for my study, including information about the sample, research tools, procedure for data collection and a summary of the data. After that I outline the data analysis method. Then I present a semiotic introduction to my informants and issues related to reflexivity. Finally, I address how I dealt with ethical issues in my research.

4.2 Qualitative research method

Social science researchers are expected to adhere to the established traditions of two main broad paradigms: qualitative and quantitative methods. Researchers either follow the traditions of one of these or propose a position that combines the two. In the quantitative method, data is quantified into figures which are used to understand social phenomena and enable researchers to obtain a general view of the research object; data is always interpreted in the form of numerical or normative patterns, shown in the form of numbers, percentages and graphs. On the other hand, the qualitative method demonstrates a different view of the world, going beyond numerical values to try to understand phenomena from a different perspective (King and Horrocks, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) defined qualitative research as 'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world' (p.3). In qualitative research,

researchers investigate social phenomena as they occur, attempting to make sense

of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin

and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research methods provide the researcher with an

interpretive lens that helps them to examine what is being researched in context

while it takes place. It takes a bottom up and in-depth view of the researched

phenomena (Holliday, 2015). One of its main traits is that it focuses on quality; the

collected data in qualitatively oriented research are not represented in numerical

values and are taken from a natural setting within a process of meaning-making.

This is a process that involves particular focus on interplay between the research

process and its context (Holliday, 2015). In this sense, meaning-making is socially

constructed; the construction of meaning or social reality lies behind the type of

knowledge that can be derived from qualitative research. This process of

construction involves all the elements that play a part in the research: what is being

researched or the sample, the researcher who conducting observation, the

researcher's knowledge and experience and the context, in which and when the

research takes place (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Kvale, 1996). In this constructivist

perspective, knowledge is viewed as socially generated rather than something that

exists or is an essence of social phenomena. Indeed, it is the outcome of a social

process.

As has been discussed above, qualitative research explores social phenomena in

their natural settings and equips researchers with detailed data that enables them to

obtain insight into what is researched (Holliday, 2015). In the current study, I decided

that qualitative research was the most appropriate method for exploring the

complexity of converts' identity work, their experiences, and for understanding how

they make sense of themselves and the world. I take the view that placing my

research within the conventions of qualitative research would enable me to understand how the identities of these converts are constructed through narrative means.

4.2.1 Narrative inquiry

There are many qualitative research paradigms and tools, including narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a research method that focuses on a specific form of discourse that emphasize references to time and space within the life story of the narrator. In conducting narrative inquiry, researchers engage with stories told by those who are being researched, and based on the analysis of the biographic account, researchers form claims about the social phenomena they are investigating (Chase, 2011). Different tools are used to collect narrative data that aim to capture discourse moments involving a biographical dimension (Linde, 1993). Central to these is the construction of a possible story, which is the focus of the present study. This method has been widely used in the social sciences and identity studies within linguistic traditions (Andrew, 2010; Baynham, 2014; Benson and Nuan, 2005; Benson, 2014; Gray, 2018; Gray and Morton, 2018; Kanno, 2003; Murphey, Chen and Chen; 2005; Norton, 2000).

Narrative inquiry has two key elements: the narrative and inquiry. The narrative is mostly controlled by a narrator or storyteller who targets in his/her narrative an audience, who is the researcher – at least in the present study. On the other hand, the researcher does the inquiry in researching the story told by the narrator (Barkhuizen, 2015). This method opens spaces of self-reflection that enable specific experiences to be investigated that would not be easy to hear about had they not been elicited by interviews, autobiographies, diaries, and so on – in which the

narrator's sense of the world, their lives and their selves are enacted (A. Gray, 2003). Moreover, narrative inquiry helps to open spaces for the stories of those who are marginalized or subordinated and takes identity theory to a place beyond the general view of a proposed group collective identity, since it allows unheard voices to be researched (Benson, 2014; Barkhuizen, 2015). It focuses on individuals' experiences, attitudes and beliefs, which brings insight to the investigation of identity construction in their narration of their experiences (Block, 2015; Josselson, 2010; Benson and Nunan, 2005). I find that adopting narrative inquiry to investigate these converts' identity would help me to unpack the complexity of their conversion experience. By investigating their conversion stories and allowing them to talk about their lives, I expected to be able to understand how they performatively constructed themselves and the world. I would argue that the performative acts they drew on in constructing their stories enabled me to learn about their identities as male expatriate Muslim converts in the K.S.A.

4.2.2 What is narrative?

At the heart of narrative inquiry is the term narrative. How narrative is perceived is central to the approach towards researching narrative inquiry. In this section, I explain my understanding of narrative and how I defined it within a performative perspective. There are various perspectives towards narrative; it is generally viewed as a form of discourse involving the generation of meaning through talking about an experience, making sense of the world through a story and ordering life events to develop a possible coherent meaningful whole story (Linde, 1993; Thomas, 2015). Narrative can be personal, generic or negative (the story of what did not happen) (Baynham, 2011). It can tell a story about someone's personal life, a witnessed

event or a possible situation. It involves engagement with different discourses, where stories are enacted, inserted and generated discursively. This can be through different means of interaction, such as when people talk in their daily life, when they write, or when they interact in any possible social setting (Georgakopoulou, 2006). There is always a possibility of narrativity in discourse. In other words, narratives are always possible, and they are everywhere (Barthes and Duisit, 1975); however, this does not mean that every form of discourse is narrative. Indeed, narrative is just one type of discourse (Goddard and Carey, 2017; Thomas, 2015). More precisely, Labov (1972) suggests that the possibility of narrative is bound to linguistic entities used to generate the narrative; these tools constitute references and represent time and space. Narratives are hence possible linguistically through the process of 'matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events' (Labov, 1972, pp. 359–360). Moreover, Smith (2006) defined narrative as a united group of clauses that semantically function as a story. In other words, narrative is a story told by one or more narrators to an audience about a lived experience or a possible past, in which the narrators choose what to say and what not to in a purposeful way. Reciprocally, the audience are not just a receiver of the story; their existence contributes to how the story is told (Barkhuizen, 2015; Leowen and Plonsky, 2016). Narrative has been widely explored in reference to time and space or the chronotope, in a Bakhtinian sense (Blommaert and De Fina, 2017). Narrators construct spatio-temporal references that denote possible entities or events. Spatiality and temporality are signified differently with different signifiers; narrative researchers explore how these themes are brought about sequentially to form a possible narrative in which characters are positioned. Accordingly, identity construction can be investigated (Bamberg, 2011; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2011; Labov, 1972; Murray, 2009).

In this study, I adopt a performative approach to narrative in which narrative is defined as a performative construction of past experience. That is, the Islamic religious converts are situated in a contextual setting in which they performatively enacted their conversion story in order to enact preferred identities that they wanted 'me' to see. Their narratives were meaningfully constructed to present themselves 'to me' as a male Islamic convert. Aligning with Baynham (2014), I perceive narrative as privileged space for identity construction. I also argue that the analytical method used in my research (see section 4.4 for more details) is helpful for understanding how converts performatively enacted their narrative identities.

4.2.3 Research aim and questions

This study aims to investigate the life story of religious converts, seeking to examine how they performatively enact their identity as male, black and Muslim. This aim is to be accomplished by examining how their identities are performatively constructed through exploring which stories are told about their religious journey to Islam, and how this relates to being an expatriate in the K.S.A. Based on this, the research questions are again stated here:

1. How are these male converts' experiences performatively enacted within the context of life story research interviews in the K.S.A.?

2. What are the commonalities and differences that performatively emerge in their stories?

3. What does this reveal about the complexity of male Islamic converts' experiences, particularly with regard to gender, race and religion, that are invoked by their narratives?

4.3 Research design

In the present study, I take narrative research approach to investigate how the identities of expatriate converts in the K.S.A were constructed. The narrative method in the present study is ethnographically informed. That is to say, although the data are primarily biographical, they are complemented by fieldnotes and artefacts such as photographs; in addition, the data were gathered in settings in which I was fully embedded. This enables a deeper understanding of how narrators make sense of the world and how they position themselves accordingly. Adopting narrative research, as illustrated in section 4.2, enables information to be obtained about their religious and gender identities. More precisely, it helps to understand the complexity of their self-identity, their stories before and after conversion, and their lives in the K.S.A. In this section, I aim to introduce the research design of my study that is life storytelling. I first overview the term of life storytelling and this is followed by outlining the tools used to collect life stories for my study.

4.3.1 Life storytelling

Narrative research can be done using different tools, and researchers can choose from among a variety of methods when conducting narrative research. They can examine diaries, letters, autobiography, daily interactions or life story interviews (Benson and Nunan, 2005; Georgakopoulou, 2006). In the present study, I use life storytelling as a frame for collecting converts' narratives. Based on the literature on life storytelling (Atkinson, 1998; Brannen, 2013; Codo, 2008; Linde, 1993), I view life storytelling as useful for exploring how these converts constructively and performatively develop their view about themselves and the world. Life storytelling is

centred on the subject. The narrators tell their stories in a possibly meaningful order, choosing what to include where and when to start, and how to relate all of this to the themes they want to emphasize (Codo, 2008; Linde, 1993). The events of the told story are thus linked in a purposeful manner to facilitate the significant themes that the narrators want to emphasize. Atkinson (1998) defines it as 'the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another' (Atkinson, 1998: p.8). It is a narrative of the social subject and how life is viewed as possibly one unit. This process involves the construction of reality and generates meaning in an organized manner (Atkinson, 2012). Life storytelling helps to understand 'who informants are, how they have come to be the people they are, and what events and experiences have shaped their lives' (Codo, 2008, p.195). The subject is understood in life storytelling as a continuing interpretive story where the tellers construct who they are by putting events together and associating them with themes which influence how they are perceived (Atkinson, 1998, 2012; Bamberg, 2011).

In telling a life story, language plays a vital role. Narrators are engaged with different linguistic practices in constructing the story; these practices become means of analysis where discourse units and linguistic structures are spaces for analysts to explore identity construction (Atkinson, 1998; Codo, 2008). Moreover, the process of telling a story comes in performative acts: the narrators performatively enact their past experiences, construct themselves and others and express their emotions in order to purposefully present themselves. Therefore, narrative is a privileged site where identities are constructed, resisted and subverted (Bayham, 2014; Brannan, 2013; Josselson, 2010). It helps to investigate who the person is (Atkinson, 1998),

and this is a very central question in identity studies (Bamberg, 2011).

4.3.2 Research tools

The present study involves investigating the complexity of these converts' identity through exploring their narratives, the stories they tell about their lives. In narrative inquiry research, as stated earlier, life stories can be obtained through a variety of means. Researchers can examine diaries, letters, autobiographies and field notes. However, interviews are a common method used by researchers for collecting life stories (Chase, 2011). In this study, as indicated above, I used ethnographically informed life story interviews as my primary research tool. My observations are drawn from my research diary and my own knowledge about the context. The data set in the present study aims to provide a better understanding of the context and the setting of the interviews, as well as to enhance the analysis process. Ethnographic data are reliant on the thickness of the documentation about what is researched, this can be through detailed observation and interviewing (Geertz, 1973), also this includes the researchers own reflexive thinking about his own experience (Adams and Manning, 2015). I consider my notes and diary as secondary tools to inform the research process, and I take them as my ethnographic observation to what I research. In the following sections, I aim to define life story interviews and illustrate my position towards research interviews as interactional. This is followed by introducing the notes and observation carried out during the interviews in the research diary.

4.3.3 Life story interviews

A life story interview is a story about someone's life. It is a qualitative research method of interviewing that collects information about the interviewee's entire life in the form of stories they tell. The interviewees tell their stories centred on their own life, in terms of how they see themselves and make sense of the world. On the other hand, the interviewer plays the role of the listener and guider of the story (Linde, 1993). This type of interview is usually conducted on an individual or group basis through face-to-face conversation (Atkinson, 2012; Josselson, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2012). Life story interviews have been widely used in qualitative research in applied and sociolinguistics (Baynham, 2014; De Fina, 2003; Gray, 2018; Gray and Morton, 2018; King and De Fina, 2010; Norton, 2000; Song, 2016; Wolff and De Costa, 2017). They share some traits with other qualitative interviews; life story interviews are a purposeful conversation and tend to be conducted in question-and-answer form aimed at eliciting biographical data to be used for research purposes (Richards, 2009). The distinct feature of life story interviews is that they are centred around the life of the narrator as a told story. This type of interview helps the researcher to gain in-depth access to the interviewee's beliefs, attitudes and experiences. It also allows the interviewee to have some freedom to choose what to say about their life. Life story interviews help to investigate social phenomena that cannot be accessed even through very intensive fieldwork observation since past experiences are usually not told unless they are elicited through questioning (Linde, 1993).

In a constructivist approach towards qualitative research interviews, life story interviews are viewed as being constitutive to the construction of knowledge.

Knowledge is viewed as being generated through certain components in the interview. First, knowledge is narrative generated through the interviewee's story. Second, knowledge is language: the narrators use language to convey their story. Language structures are constitutive of reality, and meaning is generated through these structures. Finally, knowledge is interrelational. it is generated through interaction between the interviewee, interviewer and the context; knowledge is constructed through the interaction between these three elements (Kvale, 1996). I consider life story interviews a useful tool to gain access to the life experiences of the converts. Allowing their stories to be told enabled exploration of how they make sense of their lives and their society. Life stories also enabled me to have some control over the story to direct it towards phenomena that I need the interviewee to elaborate on. I thus find life story interviews useful for investigating the complexity of these converts' identity. In the next section, I introduce my interview questions.

4.3.3.1 Interview questions

As has been mentioned above, I adopted life storytelling interviews to collect the participants' narratives about their conversion stories. I divided the interviews into three sections; this was to help me organize my data and allow me to introduce new questions, and also so that each interview could be on a specific theme. I adopted the interview questions from Linde (1993). I initially intended to organize my data within three categories that reflect the phases of the conversion story; however, I abandoned this approach because it made my data unreadable after I started the analysis. Instead, I have come to present my data in cases; each participant's conversion story is presented separately. I have decided to do this after the data was collected.

My initial idea on how to analyse the data meant that I designed the interviews in terms of three phases. The first interview was oriented towards the converts' lives before conversion. In this section, I tried to learn about their lives, starting from their early childhood up to the moment they encountered Islam. I tried in this section to ask questions that may lead to stories about their relations with religion, their families and their schooling. My intention was to allow them to perform some aspects of their identities. The second section focused on their encounter with Islam and how they decided to become a Muslim. I also tried in this section to ask them questions about their social lives, how they changed after becoming Muslims, what it was like coming out to their families, and how they developed their knowledge about Islam. In the last section, I tried to mostly orient my questions towards their decision to immigrate to Saudi Arabia and how they achieved that. I also tried to focus on their experiences as converts after leaving their homelands. During the interview, I took notes and tried to ask probing questions on themes that I felt would be useful to elaborate on. Before starting the interviews, I offered the participants the option of reading the interview questions to identify any questions that they did not want to answer, or which may prompt sensitive issues that they did not want to talk about. Before starting the fieldwork, I had planned to include some 'visual questions': by which I mean I intended to ask them to share some pictures or images they felt related to their conversion story. However, most of the participants, at the beginning, did not want to do this part of the interview. Some ascribed their refusal to religious reasons, while others did not provide any justifications. Following the refusal of the first three participants, I decided to abandon the visual part of the interview. In the following is a list of the interview questions I used in the interviews.

Table1 Interview questions

First Interview Questions	Can you tell me about the place where you were born? What was it like? How would you describe your family? What languages were spoken at home? How would you describe them? How important was religion in your family when you were growing up? Do your family comment on religious practices (for example going to church)/had you been doing so? Tell me more about that. Can you tell me about your early education? What was it like? How would you describe your religious life when you were a child and a teenager?
Second Interview Questions	When did you first hear about Islam? When did you first meet Muslims, and what was that like? How would you describe your experience with Muslims at that time? How did you start to think about Islam as your belief? Had you met any converts before being a Muslim? What was it like? Can you tell me more about that? What can you tell me about your life before coming out as a Muslim (family/job)? When did you start thinking about conversion? Who did you talk to first about that? When did you come out as Muslim (say Shahada)? What was it like?

Third Interview Questions	How did your parents and family react when you came out as a Muslim?
	How would you describe your life after coming out as a Muslim (work/family)? Can you tell me about that?
	What was it like when you start practising Islam? How did you feel about the language? Did you start reading the Quran in English?
	How did you feel about Arabic? Did you start learning it? Can you tell me more about that?
	When did you first start thinking about being a language teacher?
	What made you decide to be a language teacher?
	Have you been to any Arabic-speaking country before coming to Saudi Arabia?
	When did you start thinking about coming to Saudi Arabia to teach?
	When did you come to the K.S.A.?
	What can you tell about being in Saudi Arabia (life/people/family/job)?
	What can you tell us about being in Saudi Arabia as a Muslim?
	What does it look like to teach English in the K.S.A.? Can you tell me more about that?
	What can you tell me about your Arabic and being in the K.S.A.?
	Have you taken any Arabic classes in the K.S.A.? If so, can you tell me more about that?

Having introduced my interview questions, I now illustrate the position I have taken towards life story interviews as interactional.

4.3.3.2 Life story interviews as interactional

In narrative research analysis there has been a turn towards the interactional dimension of narrative generating (Schiffrin and De Fina, 2010; Georgakopoulou, 2015). Researchers, especially those who take a conversational analyst position towards narrative research, emphasize the importance of narrative generated through daily interaction. That is to say, in daily interaction, we construct stories that can be captured and used as research data to help in understanding how identity is interactionally constructed. This turn has been widely adopted by identity researchers, especially those who seek to examine anecdotes or short stories (Barkhuizen, 2015; Georgakopoulou, 2015; Gray and Morton, 2018). This type of narrative has been positioned in a dichotomy with a longer narrative that is elicited from conventional research interviews, in which the researched dominate the floor, narrating a story to a present or possibly absent audience. In this dichotomy, the short stories are understood to be interactional because they are elicited from daily activities, whereas elicited interviews have been understood as autobiographical and elicited for specific research purposes that lack the interactional dimension (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2011).

As such, it seems that the interactional dimension of narrative is affected by the contextual and natural settings. Moreover, this suggests that natural interaction ought to be situated in a daily context where people interact with each other on a train, at a bus stop, in a café, or via a social media post. The interaction is not made up or elicited by a researcher with their own research goals. This leads to the question of what is natural? It seems that natural interaction is defined in the above as not elicited for the purpose of the research. In this study, I align with Gray and

Morton (2018) and Baynham's (2014) understanding of research interviews as 'live interactional settings where identities and positions are at stake and are talked into being, avowed, and rejected through discursive actions and interactional moves' (Gray and Morton 2018, p.34). Life story interviews are similar to any other mode of interaction; interlocutors exchange talk with the aim of constructing stories in which they enact their identities. Assuming that what is natural is interactional, I would argue here that life story interviews can be spaces for generating natural narratives in which identities are discursively maintained, achieved and contested.

In addition to the above argument, interactional narrative analysts consider life story interviews as a kind of reflection on past events: the teller is narrating a story to an expected audience about past events and experiences. These events are less linked to the present moment or to what might happen in the future (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008; Ochs and Capps, 2001). These are placed alongside interactional narrative: small stories that are interactional and naturally occurring and linked to the present as well as the future. I will revisit the above argument in relation to the interviews conducted for my research and will attempt to illustrate how these interviews are not only reflections on past events but are meaningful for the present and may inform us about the future through natural interactional modes. In the storytelling interviews in the present study, the narrators invest in their own life stories (past events), referring to experiences and recalling or investing in characters when constructing their own conversion stories for Muslim interviewees who belong to, or are possibly ascribed to be part of, the context in which the interviews occurred. Along with these contextual strands, the interviewees try to legitimize their identities as males, Muslims, black, English language teachers and immigrant, which involves possible references and relevant to their present and possibly their

future. This contextual understanding of life story interviews for research purposes takes them beyond the past and emphasizes the role they play in scrutinizing the here and now. I have found it necessary to illustrate my perception of life story interviews in the present study in order to legitimize the positions I take towards the method of data analysis, in which I examine how these narratives about past events are used to construct preferred identities at the moment of interaction. In the next section, I introduce my supplementary data collection tool of a research diary.

4.3.4 Research diary

Keeping a research diary, in which the researcher records feelings, ideas, events, and sometimes observations that are chronologically ordered, is arguably a useful tool as supplementary data when conducting qualitative interviews. Additionally, it rigorously enhances the process of reflexivity during the data analysis process (Bloor and Wood, 2006). As already mentioned, my research aims to adopt life story interviews that were ethnographically informed. To achieve this, I kept a research diary which was used as a secondary tool in the present study. I find that keeping records of observations and immediate impressions that included off-record talk was helpful for understanding some of the features of the contexts in which the interviews occurred. The diary I kept was used as a supplementary source of data and a tool of enhancement for analysis and performing reflexivity. More details are provided about the how the diary is used in Section 4.3.5.4 this chapter. In the next section I set out the data collection procedures.

4.3.5 Procedures for collecting the data

In this section, I aim to illustrate the data collection procedures used in conducting the present study. I feel that this will help the reader make sense of how the present work was conducted. I start by introducing the pilot study. Then I overview he participants and the recruitment strategies. After that, I illustrate how the interviewing event has taken place. Then I provide a summary of the research interview data. Finally, I set out how the diary and ethnographic data were collected.

4.3.5.1 Pilot study

Following the traditions of qualitative research, before I started the fieldwork, I had conducted a pilot study that mainly aims to explore if the interview questions invoke themes pivotal in the research interests. It also accounts for the possibility of any sensitive issues the research could bring and the applicability and the transparency of the consent form and information sheet. I had managed to contact a religious convert in the UK, and I conducted the interview as described in the research design; the interviews were carried out into three sessions and were recorded. Before each session I listened to the previous one and prepare for any clarification. Following the pilot study, I was able to improve my interview skills, particularly the use of recording tools and time management techniques. I also found the pilot study useful in terms of understanding the type of stories the interview questions can elicit, as well as the interviewing techniques I needed to develop. The interviewee's feedback was also useful in identifying any issues with the interview setting and questions. In this regard, I am extremely grateful to the convert, whom I will refer to as 'James,' for his time and fruitful instruction and feedback.

4.3.5.2 The participants

In narrative research in general and life story interviews in particular, researchers can recruit a limited number of participants as the focus is sometimes on the participants' personal experience, their lives and the beliefs brought into their narratives. This kind of qualitative research aims to focus on the uniqueness of the participants' experiences, and it is unusual for claims to be made about the representativeness of such a small group to the wider population (Atkinson, 2012; Josselson, 2010). The targeted group in the present study were easily accessible at the time of conducting the fieldwork, as I have been maintaining good connection with my informants. Therefore, the plan was to recruit a purposive sample, that is, a sample constructed based on my research interests. Accordingly, I set some criteria for people who were to be identified and approached. First, they needed to be male converts to Islam who come from Anglophone countries where Islam is not the majority religion; in addition, given the prevalence of converts of colour in the setting, I selected only informants of African heritage, who were also teaching English in Saudi Arabia at the time of conducting the interviews. Another criterion was that Arabic should not be their identified first language, as I feared this might introduce issues beyond the scope of my study. These were the main criteria that I set in order to recruit participants. In the next section I explain how I recruited them.

4.3.5.3 Sample recruitment

As already stated, the participants of the present study were prominent in triggering the researcher's initial thoughts and ideas, which led to investigating their conversion stories. Before coming to do my PhD, I had worked with some of the participants at

an English centre for a while and used to socialize with them. We shared offices, talked to each other and hung out after work. Through the stories they had told me about their lives, I came to the idea of researching their conversion stories. I kept in touch with some of them and continued talking to them up to the moment of writing this thesis. This helped me in the process of recruiting and expanding the sample. After I started my fieldwork, I contacted the participants to make sure they were still interested in participating in my study. As mentioned before, because of the new immigration policy, many of them had fled Saudi Arabia; therefore, I used those who were still there at the time of my fieldwork to lead me to other converts whom I had not met. This is common in research sample formation for recruiting participants who are considered to be less accessible or not easily identified and reachable (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007); this is called the **chain referral sampling strategy**.

I had initially intended to conduct interviews in three different cities. However, this was not possible to arrange and instead, I conducted the interviews in two cities. I managed to interview four participants and included them in the present study over a period of five months. During this period of data collection, I enjoyed the relationship I had with these converts. It was a great pleasure to hear about their lives and experiences, learning about the places where they were born, and the trajectories of their lives until the moment of the interviews. However, there were some difficult moments during the fieldwork. I went through a very difficult experience that really affected and interrupted my research. I had intended to recruit a Canadian convert, Jaber (not a pseudonym); however, a day before the second interview was due to be conducted, Jaber passed away in a car accident. I saw him two days before the accident. I had spoken to him about my research, and he was eager to participate. He was among the kindest souls, an extremely kind person, a person who had a

very peaceful smile and always showed willingness to help. We did the first interview and his death meant he just ceased to exist anymore with us. Indeed, this was a very difficult experience during the fieldwork. In the following sections, I set out the interviewing event.

4.3.5.4 Procedure for conducting the interviews

As mentioned above, I had already approached some participants before commencing the fieldwork. After I started the fieldwork, I made appointments with the participants I already knew. In the first meeting, I allowed the participants to read the information sheet and consent form and sign the latter; we agreed where the interviews would take place and what would be the most appropriate time for them. I have named my informants pseudonymously as Jalal, Abdulraheem, Abdullah and Steven (see Table 2 below). The first three found that doing the interviews at the institution where they worked was the most convenient for them. I also found this useful since it gave me the chance to observe them in their workplace. The interviews were carried out during term time, mostly during their office hours. Jalal asked me to do the interviews in the very early morning. This, he suggested, would help him be focused and not interrupted by students who usually gathered in front of his office during the teaching time. It might be worth mentioning that Jalal was the head of the language centre at the time of my fieldwork and usually had very busy days. The language centre has almost three hundred staff who deliver English courses to almost four thousand students; this includes both men's and women's divisions. Abdulrahim and Abdullah offered me to do the interviews in their office from ten to twelve in the morning. Having said that, Steven preferred to do the

interviews in a more private place. He invited me to visit him at the compound where he was living, and we did the interviews in the common room. This was also informative as it allowed for some short stories to be gathered before the interview started, and which I managed to capture in my notes.

As a pre-interviewing procedure, I asked each interviewee to read the information sheet and the consent form and sign them off. I also prepared my recording devices - I used two devices (a recording device and my cell phone) as a precaution. This was to make sure that if one device failed, the other one would still record. I started the interview with my questions (see Table 1, Section 4.3.3.1 this chapter). I have also included a fully transcribed interview in Appendix 3 to help the reader understand more fully the nature of the interview event.

During the interview, I usually made notes (in the research diary referred to above), and noting down keywords that might help with probing questions. These notes were also used for writing some observations that I felt were relevant to my research or for stories not captured in the recording. After I finished each interview, I immediately started noting down some observations, impressions and feelings that were relevant to my research. I mostly did this after leaving the participants and were intentionally not very long. They usually included a description of the place and the interviewee, how the interview started, and the feelings and impressions that emerged during the interview. These notes were for data that was possibly not accessible via the recordings. I tried to report them as precisely as possible. These records were written in my notebook and were chronologically ordered. After I had finished doing the fieldwork, I transferred the notes into Word documents and attached them to the interviews after I had finished the transcriptions (See Appendix 4 for an example of

the research diary notes). In the next section, I present an overview of the interview data

4.3.5.5 Data overview

The interviews were conducted mostly over a period of two weeks from early February 2018 to late May 2018. The time span assigned for each participant was stretched, aiming to allow me to listen to the interviews and take some notes for the next one. Nevertheless, in some cases, I had to do the interviews in a shorter time, especially the interview with Steven, where I had to travel. I also had a long break between the second and third interview with Abdullah. This was because the participant was busy with his second-term final exams. The following table provides a summary of the interview data.

Table2 Interview summary

Name	Status	Country of Origin	Ethnicity	Time of Conversion	Teaching Experience	Arabic Fluency	Number of Meeting
Abdulrahim	He is married to a Palestinian Egyptian woman and has two sons and one daughter	United States	African-American	He converted in his early thirties	He has been teaching English in Egypt and Saudi Arabia for 16 years	He can read the Quran and has good communication skills, but he isn't fluent	Three times; the interviews varied in their length from 45 minutes to 72 minutes
Jalal	He is married to a born Muslim of converted parents	United States	African-American	He converted in his early twenties while at college; he	He has been teaching English in Egypt and Saudi	Jalal is fluent in Standard Arabic and has a good level of fluency in local colloquial	Three times; each interview lasted for

	and has two daughters and two sons			has been a Muslim for more than 25 years	Arabia for about 15 years		about an hour
Steven	He is married to a convert	United Kingdom	British Caribbean	He converted in his late teens and has been a Muslim for about 12 to 15 years	He has been teaching English for about six years	He can read the Quran and has very limited proficiency in Arabic	Four times; the interviews varied from 30 to 75 minutes
Abdullah	He is married to a Saudi Pakistani woman and has a one daughter	United Kingdom	British Zimbabwe	Converted after he finished college in his early twenties	He has been teaching English for about five years	He is fluent in Standard Arabic and has a good level of Saudi colloquial	Three times; the interviews varied in length from 50 minutes to 70 minutes

Having set out the research design for the present study. I now move to introduce my data analysis method. I will return to my informants again in greater detail below in the section on semiotic framing. I have withheld this until later as it arises out of my discussion below and, coming towards the end of the chapter, aims to provide a bridge to each narrator's narrative.

4.4 Data analysis

Throughout this chapter, I have emphasized the constructive nature of identity. I adopt Butler's perspective towards approaching these converts' narratives in which experiences and identities are performatively enacted. Therefore, I feel obliged to adopt an analytical method that matches the radical constructive view of identity

proposed by performativity (Baxter, 2016). Moreover, as illustrated earlier in Chapter 2 and 3, enquiries on identity construction usually approach it from two perspectives: top down (a more essentialist view of identity) or bottom up (the performativity position). Analysts usually take up one of these two positions before navigating and analysing data. In the present work, I take a bottom up perspective informed by Butlerian performativity in identity construction. This has led me to develop a data analytic model that I have termed **performative narrative analysis** in which I draw on ethnographically informed biographical data. I argue that this provides a lens that helps the analyst to unpack the process of identity construction in interactional settings. In this section, I illustrate how the data was analysed. First, I discuss the adopted transcription tradition and the thematic structure of the data analysis chapters. Then I introduce my data analysis method.

4.4.1 Transcription

Transcription is viewed as a vital step in data analysis (Bird, 2005) and helps the researcher to develop a very detailed preliminary sense of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). This provides insight into the themes that emerged from the interviews, enhancing the researcher's attitude towards the data (Cameron, 2001). In the present study, the data has been transcribed via three steps. First, I find it useful to listen to the interviews more than once, trying to recall them and to refresh my memory. I thought that this would enable me to keep pace with the talk during transcription. Second, I started to transfer the spoken discourse into text form. I tried in this step to note down every spoken utterance. This do not include all repetition, sounds of irritation and murmuring, which I decided to omit at moment when they do not form part of the analysis. Finally, I printed the transcriptions and listened again to

the interviews and capture any possible meaningful instances of high tones or laughter.

One of the linguistic practices of my participants that I want to scrutinize was code-switching between Arabic and English. Although this is not very frequent in their utterances, I intend to focus on any use of Arabic words. These utterances are written in italics using the English alphabet. The following is a list of the transcription conventions:

Table 3 Transcription conventions

(.)	Short pause
Italic	Arabic words
…	Long pauses
/laughter/	Long/loud laugh
=	Latching
[…]	To describe talk pattern
Bold	Reported speech
Underline	High tone

4.4.2 Data management and presentation

It is vital at this stage to illustrate how the data will be presented and managed in the data analysis chapters as this is pertinent to the reflexivity issues in the present study. As stated earlier, I initially planned to present the data based on the phases used in designing the interviews; thus, I intended to present the data under three headings: their lives before Islam, their conversion, and their life after converting and

coming to Saudi Arabia. However, later I have come to realize that such an approach would lead to my data being hard to follow and make sense of. Therefore, I decided to present each convert's life story in a separate chapter. I found that the converts' narratives were very rich in term of the merged stories. This presented a challenge of which to include as it would not be applicable for a PhD thesis to include all the stories that emerged in the interviews. Therefore, I have decided to include theoretically charged stories that are pertinent to race, gender and religion. I also have tried to include segments from all three phases of their lives before and after Islam and after they had fled their home countries. In most cases, I have included five narrative segments, preceded by a description that helped the reader not to lose the flow of the story.

To ensure that the readers are able to make sense of their life story as a whole, I start each convert's story with an overview of his narrative in which I try to include all the most prominent events from their conversion story. Again, this is based on my understanding of what is important. Under each narrative segment, I apply the first two steps of the analysis and at the end of each chapter I present the second step of the analysis. This is illustrated in more detail in the next section.

4.4.3 Performative narrative analysis

As stated earlier, there has been a tension in identity studies between people who approach identity as a top down process of construction and those who approach it as a bottom up construct (Bamberg, 2004a). The former argues that interlocutors, through interaction, take existing positions provided in discourse, whereas the latter contend that the subjects constitute positions and discourse at the moment of interaction (Baxter, 2016; Baynham, 2014). These two ends of the argument, a world

to agent versus an agent to the world construction (Bamberg 2011), have a particular logic behind their claims: the defence for the top down identity construction position is that identities or positions pre-exist the subject, while the interlocutor takes position to normative frames in discourse (gender, race, professions… etc.). When actors are engaged in enacting gender identity, they are investing in what is already available in discourse, mediated by language and social institutions that contribute how they construct that identity (Davies and Harre, 1990). On the other hand, the bottom up approach to identity construction argues that the interlocutor (subject) agentively takes possible positions into being by conforming, challenging and possibly subverting what is available and culturally assumed to be normative in discourse (Butler, 1990; Braxter, 2016). Since the present study takes a performative perspective towards identity, I find it necessary to adopt a data analysis method that reconciles with performativity. Consequently, I find that Baynham's (2014) work on identity provided a helpful starting point for how we can look at these converts' narratives.

Baynham (2014) applies Zimmerman's (1993) concept of contextual identity to explain how we can analytically overcome this tension in analysing identities in narratives. He argues that 'the solution to this dilemma is to historicize our understanding of identity work, while paradoxically maintaining an emphasis on its performativity' (Baynham, 2014, p. 69). He explains that when there is an interaction between interlocutors, the actors performatively engage in taking up 'identity positions' in discourse. These momentary, brought about, discourse positions inform us about what is brought along as more historical and congealed positions. That is to say, these 'accumulated identity acts' are the constituents of dominant cultural positions; it is by repeating and reiterating the acts and events that positions become

historical and more congealed in discourse. Moreover, through the ongoing

enactment of what is brought about in interactions, these positions become

sedimented and normative. It is possible to examine this process of identity

construction by looking at interactional moments; from there, the analyst moves to

understand the process of identity construction through means of narrative. In the

following sections, I illustrate how I analytically explore this by analysing the

positions taken up by these converts' narratives.

4.4.3.1 Placing performativity in analysing narrative identity

In the present study, I build on Baynham's (2015) **performative sociolinguistic**

perspective. I argue that the analytic tradition adopted in my work explore both past

events, the story characters, and the identities constructed by the interlocutors as all

performative, they all are actions, or a doing where interlocutors agentively enact

their sense of the world and themselves. In this section, I begin by discussing how

performativity has been used to develop an analytical model for investigating

masculine identity. Then I illustrate the common feature in models, in which

positioning analysis is a core aspect of their analytical frameworks. I also illustrate

how the present study builds on Baynham's (2015) **performative sociolinguistic**

perspective to narrative identity.

Since the publication of *Gender Trouble* (1990), there have been attempts to develop

analytical models that apply the performative perspective to investigating identities in

narratives. Among the pioneering work is Cameron (1997), who attempted to use

conversational analysis to investigate male narratives; this is viewed as the earliest

attempt to include performativity in the empirical work of linguistics. This was

followed by another expansion by McIlvenny (2002), and Speer and Potter (2002),

who tried to use traditions from both discourse analysis and conversational analysis to investigate identity construction in narratives. Other researchers expanded upon this within the field of linguistics to develop analytical frames that enable the researcher to explore masculine identity construction that is informed by performativity. For example, Morison (2011) applied Butlerian performativity and Tayler's narrative discursive method to develop what she refers to as narrative discursive analysis in investigating masculinity among heterosexual white Afrikaners in parents' decision making in South Africa. In her analysis, she followed Bamberg's (2004a) positioning steps along with Riessman's (2002) positioning levels in proposing her positioning model. In her analytic model, she made an attempt to identify the discursive resources used by the narrator based on the frequency in which these resources are used. Moreover, Gibert et al. (2014) attempted to develop a performative analytic model in investigating the male partner caretaker of a cancer patient. They developed their analysis model by adopting Riessman's (2002) positioning levels to understand how masculinity and caring are constructed in narrative.

Navigating this literature shows that there is a strong emphasis on the importance of positioning analysis. In the two studies mentioned above, the researchers applied positioning analysis developed by Bamberg (2004) and Riessman (2002). They either adopted one of these approaches (Gebert et al, 2014) or tried to combine them together (Morison, 2011). Both models seem to reconcile with the understanding of identity as performatively enacted by repeating and possibly challenging and subverting regulatory frames. In the next sections, I explain why I find positioning analysis to be vital for the present study.

4.4.3.1.1 Positioning analysis and stance taking.

Before examining the available tools for analysing positions within a performative perspective, it would be pertinent to illustrate why I need to analyse positions in investigating these converts' identities. Positions are defined by Davies and Harre (1990) as the enactment of the selves via interactional and communicational means. They 'are features of the local moral landscape. People are assigned positions or acquire or even seize positions via a variety of prior implicit and explicit acts' (Harre et al, 2009, p. 9), which include evaluative language, or more precisely, stance taking (Baynham, 2014; Dubois, 2007; Englebretson 2007). In the process of interacting, in the present study 'narrating', the interlocutors are engaged with linguistic tools and resources to exchange talk and meaning. One of these linguistic tools is evaluative language, which can be defined as a 'broad cover term for expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about' (Thomas and Hunston, 2000: cited in Englebretson, 2007, p.16). On the other hand, stance is defined as a 'public act by a social actor, achieved through overt means, of evaluating an object, positioning the subject, and aligning with other subjects in a salient dimension of the stance field' (Du Bois, 2007, p.163). When interlocutors are engaged in the process of evaluation, they take stances, and consequently enact positions for themselves and their story world characters. In other words, taking stances in discourse implies taking up positions. That is to say, in discourse, there are metaphorically normative places or categories in which we position ourselves accordingly. This means that there is a historical imagined position that pre-exists the subjects and we accordingly position ourselves according to these imagined

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positions (Kayi-Aydar, 2018). But how that might be possible depends on the performative perspective of the subject, where acts are understood to be the very constituents to the subjects and their positions in discourse? Bamberg (2004a, 2011) argues that these positions are constituted over the accumulation of repeated and reiterated social acts. These repeated acts are congealed, sedimented and historicised in discourse. In other words, it is the reiteration and the repetition of the acts that constitute the pre-existing means by which positions are taken. These available positions are understood to be normative and usually labelled as master narrative, dominant discourse, available cultural narratives, and so on (Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b, 2011). Accordingly, the subjects agentively position themselves by conforming, challenging, and possibly subverting, what is available in discourse. In the next section, I set out the two prominent traditions that are widely used among analysts. These are positioning step analysis in Bamberg's work (2004a, 2004b, 2008) and positioning level analysis developed by Riessman (2002). This includes explaining why I choose Bamberg's analytical method of positioning analysis over that of Riessman.

4.4.3.1.2 Bamberg versus Riessman

Before illustrating my approach to data analysis in the present study, it would be useful to first review the two prominent positioning analysis models. Then I explain why I selected Bamberg's (2004a) positioning steps over Riessman's (2002) positioning levels for conducting performative narrative analysis in the present study. Riessman's (2002) positioning levels begin by looking at how narrative is launched in the 'immediate discursive context' – such as research interviews: the interviewer and the interviewee and what is available through the interview context informed by the

interview setting. At this level, the interviewee starts to project their identities and dialogically and interactionally positions themselves in accordance with these identities. At the next level of positioning, the analyst starts looking at how these identities are positioned in the broader cultural discourse. At the last level, the analyst moves back to how the interviewee positions and aligns themselves with people from the story world, such as colleagues, family members, partners, and so on. Looking at this tool of positioning analysis, we can assume that it starts dialogically from a micro level of identity construction at the first level (positioning the subject and those involved in the interaction moment). Then it moves to the broader cultural context, which might be described as a macro level of identity. Then it moves back to the story and its people to see how they are positioned accordingly. Moreover, it moves from the present moment of interaction to the past of what has been brought into the story. I find that back and forth moves, from micro to macro levels, do not align with the concept of identity brought about and brought along that is informing my understanding of identity construction, which take a bottom up approach. Therefore, I find it challenging to utilize this positioning analysis tool proposed by Reissman (2002) in the present study.

On the other hand, Bamberg developed an analytical tool that mitigates the tension between the two different approaches to identity in narrative (top down versus bottom up) by building on Speer and Potter (2002) and revisiting the positioning theory of Davies and Harre (1990). Accordingly, he proposes three positioning steps. In these steps, Bamberg tries to explore how analysing the practices that construct the narrative and constitute the identities of the interlocutors in the interactional moments could help us learn about the dominant discourses or the master narrative. He expands upon this by arguing that interlocutors interactionally exchange talk

about possible past events, drawing on semiotic and discursive practices available to them (there and then); they consequently manage to present themselves with their identities at the moment of the interaction (here and now). This could illustrate how they brought along the master narrative which are more sedimented acts in discourse (Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b, 2011, 2019). The moves from the story to the narrators' identities to how these identities conform, challenge or subvert the cultural inscriptions in Bamberg's work concurs with the performative perspective of identity construction. It has also been utilized by Baynham (2014), whose work is fundamental to my analysis. In the following, I illustrate how the present study contributes to the view of space and time within performative perspective

4.4.3.1.3 Space and time in performative narrative analysis

Baynham (2015) argues that over the development of the narrative method in social science, time and space are understood as a 'backdrop', or a backstage from where the narrative draws meaning. In that vein, the 'role of space and spatialization practices in narrative [is limited] 'to a kind of backdrop or stage-setting for the action which unfolds in time' (Baynham, 2015: P.120). Baynham then moves on to explore space as performatively appropriated in time, arguing that space appears as a narrative action, or a doing that entails the construction of what is meant to be spatial in relation to what is understood to be temporal at a discursive moment. This has led Baynham to argue for a **performative sociolinguistics** that takes space as action, 'and this action in narrative is characteristically doing identity work' (Baynham, 2015: p.137). Constitutive of this action are linguistic acts or, in other words, linguistic units. These linguistic units (sounds, words, and grammatical relations) are bound to sedimented social meanings (Du Bois, 1986). In that sense, the relationship between

the linguistic and the social is performative (Baynham, 2012). Here, the agentive subjects socially insert themselves in space and time, which are 'made over through identity work' (Baynham, 2012: p.120). That is by drawing on what is available to them (linguistically and corporeally) in order to bring in what I termed preferred self-identifications (preferred identities) at the moment of telling. My term of preferred identity corresponds to the identity brought about in Banyham's (2014) analysis, with more emphasis on the agency of the subjects in their preferences of how they wanted to present themselves at the moment of telling. For researchers who adopt **performative sociolinguistics** for researching narrative, I argue that the analytic model in the present study provides a lens to performatively explore narrative construction by exploring how space and time are enacted as well as identities through various linguistic and corporeal acts, accounting for the agency of the narrators. It also provides a detailed account of linguistic possibilities for doing agency, which is illustrated in the first step of the analysis in section 4.4.3.2.1. Besides, it uses ethnographic data to inform the analysis and provides a more in-depth understanding of identity construction. In the following, I outline the analytic model for the present study.

4.4.3.2 The analytic model

As has already been mentioned, the analytic model in the present study is informed by the analytical methods developed by Bamberg, which were later expanded by Baynham by adding the concept of brought about and brought along identity. It also draws on some Labovian analytical traditions (Labov and Waletzkey, 1997; Labov, 1972) to help make sense of the stories. It does not take a Labovian narrative analysis perspective to narrative, where repeated structures are taken to be

constituents of narrative patterns. It rather finds in Labovian analysis a useful terminology to apply in the linguistic analysis of the stories- more particularly, the notion of orientation, which refers to the theme of the story and what it is about, and the notion of coda which refers to the statement that marks the end of the story.

In the model, there are two hypothetical levels of identity construction. The first level can be referred to as the momental or the preferred identities the narrators want to present themselves with. The enactment of these preferred identities, the brought about ones, take us to another level of identity construction, which is the brought along identities: the master narratives or the more congealed regulatory frames. Through this process of enactment, narrators conform, challenge, resist or subvert the master narratives they encounter when engaged in discursive spaces. These two levels of identity construction can be analysed through the positioning steps proposed by Bamberg (2004a). The following diagram summarizes the model:

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                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │  Performative   │
                        │    narrative    │
                        │    analysis     │
                        └─────────────────┘
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Performative narrative analysis

The momental interactional preferred identities (identity brought about)

The more congealed master narratives (identity brought along)

Step 1: the analysis of the story world (there and then)

Step 2: what is achieved from the story (here and now)

Step 3: what can we learn from the enactment of the two steps about the more dominant discourses ?

Analysing how stances are taken and how characters are positioned in the story

Analysing the linguistic units that make up the narrative

Analysing how the narrator prefers to be seen to his audience and how the audience are positioned

Analysing how the interactional enacted preferred identities inform us about the more congealed dominant ones

1 Analytic Model

As can be seen, the analysis starts with the there and then; it aims to unpack how

characters are positioned and arranged in time and space to construct a meaningful

story. To achieve this, there is a need to analyse the linguistic choices made by the

narrators in constructing the narrative. This brings us to the here and now, where the

narrators' preferred identities are enacted at the moment of telling, which is termed

by Baynham (2014) as the identity brought about. By analysing how the narrators

enact these preferred identities, this informs us about the master narrative or the

identity brought along which are more congealed in discourse. This analytic model

aims to illustrate how identity is constructed at the moment of interaction. It is

through the acts of telling and through engagement with the discursive and corporeal

spaces that identities emerge, and consequently, through ongoing accumulation and

sedimentation of these acts, they become culturally inscribed. In the following, I set out how each step is conducted in the analysis process.

4.4.3.2.1 First step

As mentioned above, the analysis starts with scrutinizing the there and then of the story world and how characters are positioned accordingly. In this first step, the aim is to understand the construction of the story world and how the characters and the events are arranged spatiotemporally. As it has been argued in section 3.3.6, Chapter 3, linguistic acts constitute the subjects' and the subjects' positions in narrative, and agency is understood as the ability of these subjects to act (Ahearn, 2001); therefore, to understand how these subjects emerge in discourse, I argue that we should analyse the linguistic acts that embody them. These linguistic acts are used to make the narrative possible, to project and distribute agency and responsibilities of knowledge (Hill and Irvine, 1992), and to construct subjects' positions as well as the story world including space and time. To analyse these, I drew on different literature, seeking to develop an analytical inventory that I could refer to while conducting the linguistic analysis in the first step of the analysis. This can be seen in the next table:

Table 4 Linguistic Analysis inventory

FUNCTION	LINGUISTIC FEATURES	APPLICATIONS
NARRATIVITY	Tense	• Rhetorical shifts in tense from the present to the past have been used by Labov (1972) to determine the narrative clause in which the story orientation was mostly situated.

		• Tense has been used by Baynham (2011, 2014) to distinguish the narrative types, especially personal narrative (past) and generic narrative (Present).
AGENCY & STANCE TAKING AND ALIGNMENT	Transitivity and argument structure	• Transitivity has been used by Duranti (1994) to understand how agency is projected. The use of a transitive verb indicates that the narrator is reclaiming an agentive role in the story told, e.g. I broke up with her. In this sentence, the interlocutor used the active voice, which indicates how he/she is reclaiming an agentive role in ending the relationship. The subject is agentive, and the object is the recipient of the act – less agentive. It has been used by Du Bois (2007) to understand the stance types. He used the predicate in the argument structure to analyse the evaluative units used by narrators, which indicate the positions they take in interactions.
	Reported speech	• Analysts have aimed to understand how informants project their agency and responsibility of the utterance (De Fina, 2003; Hill and Zepeda, 1992; Hill and Irvine, 1992; Besnier, 1992): e.g., she told me 'You should find a house yourself'. The interlocutor in this utterance presents him/herself as less agentive. It was not him/her who decided; he/she was rather told to do so; it appears that the interlocutor in this utterance makes his/her role appear passive and diffuses his/her responsibility for the action.
	Pronominal choice	• Pronominal choices have been used by De Fina (1995, 2003) to investigate how agency is projected and diffused. The use of the first personal pronoun indicates how the interlocutor reclaims his/her authority in the utterance. They also show how the interlocutor aligns him/herself with the people of the story. The interlocutor's choice of first, second and third pronouns shows how he/she wants to align him/herself with others (De Fina, 1995); e.g. I will use an utterance from one of my participants in my study: he was talking about sects in Christianity and said, 'in Christianity they have for example Orthodox and Catholic while in Islam we have Sunni and Shia'. The convert was narrating a story about his father's conversion from orthodox to Catholic and compared that to Islam. By using the first pronoun 'we', we can learn how he wanted to align himself with Muslims (him, me and other Muslims) and determine who is the other with the third personal pronoun 'they', which are the Christians (including his parents).
	Modality	• Modality is a linguistic term that refers to the interlocutor's commitment to truth and the level of credibility in their statement (Halliday, 1985). This is

usually expressed in English through auxiliary verbs to manifest ability, possibility, necessity, etc. These verbs contribute to the interlocutor's subjectivity and help in understanding speaker agency. The terms I will be using are deitic modality which refers to the expression of social role, epistemic modality which refers to the speaker knowledge of the world and boulomaic' modality which expresses the speaker attention and violation (Narrog, 2012). They are also considered to be evaluative elements that illustrate how the narrators try to take stances to the narrative they produce (Englebretson, 2007). I also look at mental state epistemic verbs which express possibility of knowledge (Narrog, 2012).

The above table provides linguistic tools that could help in understanding how the narrators projected their agency, constructed positions, and adopted stances in their narratives. These linguistic tools and resources are spaces for the analyst to learn about how the narrators positioned and placed the characters of their story and how relations between these characters were established. By scrutinizing these linguistic tools and resources, the analyst tries to answer the question: 'how are the characters depicted, and what is the story about (its theme)?' (Bamberg, 2004a, p. 336). In the data analysis chapters, the first step of the analysis is applied after presenting each segment from the convert's story.

When approaching the linguistic analysis in the first step, I perceived the utterances of my informants as producing realities rather than representing realities. Therefore, I am cautious in making any claims about what realities there are behind these utterances. In this, I build on Du Bois (1986) who argues that linguistic structures are charged with social meaning, and I take this approach to avoid being trapped in what Wittgenstein (1997) refers to as 'the grammar confusion', in which analysts would misinterpret the language produced if they understand their analysis to be representing what the utterance is representing. According to Wittgenstein, linguistic

analysis is a representation of the representation of a reality. Therefore, I view linguistic analysis as an attempt to interpret what realities the utterances are producing. That is to say, utterances and their analysis are producing realities rather than representing them. Therefore, I argue that linguistic acts are saturated with social meaning through the ongoing recitation and reiteration of them in discursive events; the linguistic acts are complex in which their sedimented historical meaning and their linguistic structures interplay in saturating their social present (I hope this becomes clearer to the reader as I apply the analytic model throughout the analysis chapters. I will also elaborate more on this in the conclusion chapter in section 10.2.1).

4.4.3.2.2 Second step

After analysing the story and how it is constructed, I move to the second step of my analysis and attempt to unpack what identities the narrators wanted to establish. I aim to understand how they positioned themselves and me when they narrated the story. In this step, I shift to the moment of interaction between the narrator and audience (me). In other words, the focus was on what preferred identities they constructed for themselves, and how they wanted to present themselves to their audience.

The second step follows the analysis of the first step under each converts' narrative segments. I rhetorically use the question of what I identities converts wanted to be seen with at the moment of telling. This question drives the application of the second step of the analysis. At the end of each data analysis chapter, I sum up the converts' preferred identities that are pertinent to my informants and to my research interests.

This aims to provide a better understanding of the identities brought about when the story was told.

4.4.3.2.3 Third step

The last step of analysis involves moving from these micro-levels of interaction and identity construction of the identity brought about to the macro construction of the identity brought along. Through the positioning of themselves and other of the story in the 'there and then' and relating this to the moment of interaction, 'here and now', it is possible to learn how narrators engaged with the question of identity work: 'who am I?' (Bamberg, 2011). This question implies that narrators positioned themselves through the normative positions available to them by either confirming, challenging and resisting or subverting them. This does not suggest that the brought along identities are fixed and static; it just shows how they are discursively normalized and stabilized. The enactment of these positions is through performative acts that are pertinent to congealed regulatory frames in discourse. For example, the engagement with constructing a masculine identity that is brought along may not be as relevant to the narrators as it is for the analyst. It is the analysts who makes the connection between the two levels of identity construction. The analyst is responsible for eliciting these meanings and linking them to what appear dominant in discourse.

In the present study, my aim is to understand how the informants positioned themselves as Muslim American/British male convert expatriates in Saudi Arabia. These are the pertinent master narratives (in Bamberg's (2004a) words) that are brought along (in Baynham's (2014) words) and are relevant to my research interests; I discuss these in relation to the preferred identities they constructed for themselves in their narratives. This is presented in Chapter 9, which discusses the

third step of the analysis. In discussing these themes, I refer to the relevant literature presented in Chapter 2 and 3. I intend to understand how their brought about identities confirm, challenge or resist and possibly subvert the master narratives. The outlined analytic model contributes to the existing literature in three ways. First, analytically, it provides an in-depth linguistic analysis account of narrativity, agency, stance taking and alignment, which works as an inventory for doing linguistic analysis for narrative identity within a performative perspective; the performative here stems from its emphasis on the reiteration and recitation of these linguistic acts .These acts not only constitute the subjects, but also the story worlds and narrated events as well as the spatial-temporal reference to what appears to be the past in order to enact a meaningful present. Second, the analytic model affirms the agency of the narrators by exploring the identities brought about as preferred self-representations at the moment of telling. Finally, its emphasis on the ethnographically oriented dimension that aims to incorporate the corporeal adds a new insight to the existing literature on narrative identity from a performative perspective. outlined the data analysis method, I move now to the next section in which I present a semiotic framing of the participants in the present study.

4.5 Semiotic framing of the informants

In the following I introduce each of my participants, ordered in accordance with the analysis chapters. I do not intend to conduct a detailed semiotic analysis of the images presented in the following sections as one might find in a multimodal study; rather, I wish to illustrate how my informants style their bodies in terms of what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as hexis. I hope that this gives readers a visual sense of how my informants embodied their religious identity. In doing so, I refer to my

fieldnotes and to pictures (men in the pictures are not the real informants of the present study; they are rather others who share with the real informants a similar level of religious embodiment). This is to help illustrate the embodiment of my informants. Having said that, it is necessary to explain how dress and hair are indicators of Salafist religiosity in the Saudi context. There are two different embodiments of Salafist religiosity. The first is the *Muṭawwi'*, a group which corresponds to the local Saudi way of embodying Salafist religiosity, sometimes is called Wahhabism, and the second is universal Salafism. These are not very distinct from one another, but the *Muṭawwi'* embodiment is influenced by Bedouin norms. Bedouin men who have a more religious attitude usually wear short *thobes* (a *thobe* is a long baggy dress that covers the body from the shoulders to the ankles); the shorter the *thobe*, the more religiosity it conveys; sometimes, people wear it so short that it shows the entire lower part of their legs well above the ankles. In addition, the *Muṭawwi'* usually wear *kufiyah* (or *Shmāgh* in Saudi dialect, which is a scarf that men wear to cover their heads) without *agal* (a rounded belt that is placed on the *kufiyah*). The absence of the *agal* is also associated with the display of piety. The style of the beard and moustache are also indicators of religiosity within Saudi *Muṭawwi'*; those who adhere to a pious religious identity usually have longer beards and a shorter moustache. On the other hand, the universal Salafist embodiment, while similar in terms of face hair style, differs with regard to the dress code. The universal Salafists are less strict with regard to *thobe* length and are open to western way of dressing.

4.5.1 Abdulrahim

As the analysis chapter following this one starts with Abdulrahim's conversion story, I have decided to start the introduction of my informants with him. Abdulrahim is an

African-American; he grew up in a deprived area in a metropolitan city in the United

States (more details will be given in his biographical overview in Chapter 5). I was

introduced to Abdulrahim in Jalal's office. He is very tall, which is something he

bragged about in the interview when white boys avoided getting any fight with him

because he was tall and muscular (refer to section 5.4 chapter 5); he was dressed in

local Saudi dress. He was wearing a *thobe*, and he covered his head with a *kufiyah*.

Abdulrahim also has a long fair beard, which tidily slides down his light brown face.

Figure 1 provides a general sense of how he dressed.

Picture 1 Abdulrahim

The thobe he dressed in was short enough not to cover his ankles, and the *kufiyah*

he put on his head without *agal* indicates a pious religious attitude. In other words,

the way Abdulrahim is seen to be dressed in the picture indicates a common way of

dressing among *Muṭawwiʿ* who want to demonstrate a pious Salafist persona.

When I met Abdulrahim in Jalal's office, we exchanged conversation, and he was very calm and polite. I told him about my research and gave him a consent form and information sheet. We agreed that the interviews would be conducted in his office during his two-hour break time at the centre. Consequently, we set appointment times for the interviews to take place.

4.5.2 Jalal

Jalal is a friend of mine with whom I have a long relationship. When I was doing the interview, he was the chair of the language centre. When he was assigned a post as the director of the language centre, this was welcomed by most of our colleagues because of his good disposition. He was very popular among the staff and the students also welcomed his appointment, by virtue of the fact that Jalal speaks fluent Arabic with a good knowledge of the local vernacular, as well as his good character. I contacted Jalal asking him when he wanted to do the interviews, and he told me that the best time to come is the very early morning because it will be less busy. Therefore, he suggested that I could come after the morning prayer, which meant about 6:30 in the early morning. I arrived about that time at his office, and Jalal was dressed in a short *thobe* that did not touch his ankles and was twisting a scarf around his neck with a white hat on his head. Jalal has light brown skin and a fair short beard with a muscular body. The following picture could give the reader a sense of how he dressed and what he looked like:

Picture 2 Jalal

Jalal's style of dressing expresses how he embodied his religious identity with less

piety than Abdulrahim. While it is hard to judge his level of embodiment, putting on a

scarf and the way he conducted himself indicates a kind of Muslim identity which is

not particularly associated with the locality of Saudi culture, dressing like *Muṭawwi‘*,

though I should say that he was committed to religious and Arabic classes. But the impression I had while I was working and later when interviewing him was that he presented a more universal Salafist religious identity that was not very bound to the locality of its form within Saudi Arabia.

4.5.3 Steven

I had known Steven for long time and have a very good friendship with him. We used to meet up after work and I still deem him a friend. I told him about my research, and he was happy to participate. A day before the interview, I drove to the city where he lived, a different city, to do the interviews. We were supposed to meet in his residential common room in the compound where he lives. He informed me that non-resident Saudis were not allowed to enter the compound unless accompanied by a resident. He said this is to give non-Saudis more privacy to do what they cannot do outside the compound without being bothered about the community outside. This includes partying, drinking, and going out without an *'Bāyh.* Steven suggested that we take a walk around before starting the interview in the common room. This was to show me the place. He also told me that I should not be surprised if I see a woman walking around with skimpy clothing. In this walk, he told me a few things about the place where he lived and about the things people can do here which they could not do outside the compound.

Steven is a tall muscular Black British man with a Caribbean background. He was dressed in trousers and a shirt. I also noted that Steven's beard was trimmed and seemed to be shorter than before. I used to see Steven putting on a *thobe* wherever he went; even at work, he used to put on a *thobe* and sometimes a *kufiyah*. I felt that there was a change in how Steven embodied his religious identity, especially in how

he embodied the local form, accounting for how he dressed and the beard. This definitely does not suggest any questioning of the authenticity of his Muslimhood. I just found that he looked different from before and this seems to be relevant to the stories he narrated in the interviews about the need to dress in more modern clothing because of his new working environment. The following picture gives you a better sense of how he looked like when I interviewed him.

Picture 3 Steven

4.5.4 Abdullah

Abdullah joined the institution after I started my PhD, which made him one of those with whom I had no relationship before he agreed to participate in my study. I had been introduced to Abdullah by Jalal; when we met, he seemed familiar with research on religious converts. Abdullah is Black British and came to live in the UK from Zimbabwe when he was 11. He is mixed half Zambian from his father's side and half Zimbabwean from his mother's side. He is of average height with dark skin and a very smiley face and a tidy long beard that was long enough to cover his neck. When I met him in Jalal's office, he was dressed in a *thobe* that was short enough not to cover his ankles and wore a white hat that covered the top of his head. Abdullah is fluent in Arabic with good knowledge of the local vernacular. I hope the following picture gives a better sense of his embodiment of his religious identity.

Picture 4 Abdullah

Abdullah's dress and his long beard indicates his embodiment of a religious identity
that matches that of Salafists with a lower degree of the local form of *Muṭawwiʻ* in
Saudi Arabia.

4.5.5 The researcher

Building on the argument I have presented in section 4.3.3.2 of this chapter, where I emphasized the interactional nature of research interviews and how stories are co-constructed between the participants and me the researcher, I feel it would be useful to introduce myself and show how I embodied my religious identity as a Saudi male Muslim. This identity seemed to shape my informants' narratives; I feel this would also help my readers make sense of how meaning and identities are negotiated. I am a born Saudi Muslim, and I work with my informants, or used to work with them considering that most of them have now moved to different places. I also maintain a very good friendship with some of them. I am a committed Muslim and am aware that the way I dress and carry myself in Saudi Arabia is sometimes associated with a religious identity, this is despite the fact that I do not follow the dress code of *Muṭawwi'*. Sometimes. Though sometimes I have been called *Muṭawwi';* this was especially common among shop sellers and students. I guess this is because of my little beard. In general, the following picture could give a better sense of what I look like.

Picture 5 The researcher

Although my research does not adopt an autoethnographic research design, I still think it would be helpful to reflect on myself and how I embodied a local identity. As you can see in the picture, I have a little beard and usually do not wear very long *thobes*. I should say that the way I dress embodies less religiosity than the way, for example, Abdulrahim dresses. I do wear an *agal* over my *kufiyah*, and it is very rare

that I go out without wearing my *kufiyah*. I never wear modern western dress in public areas in Saudi Arabia. In fact, I have been struggling a lot with clothing during my residence in the UK. I am also married and a father of two boys.

4.6 Reflexivity

A problematic issue at the beginning of the study was how I would consider my position in the research and what claims I would be able to make. Considering the prominent role I exerted upon the process of generating knowledge, how would I explore that role and to what extent could this role be explored as an effect? That is to say, complying with the research process and conforming with the research traditions of western institutions would make me appear in the possible role as a researcher. The position taken by me through these practices of doing the researcher contributed to the representation of my participants. Addressing these questions has been an enduring concern for me. I have tried to overcome this concern by rethinking myself as not just a researcher but as the researched in my study. This will be illustrated in this section as I attempt to show how I understand reflexivity.

Reflexivity is an ongoing process of examining the researcher's roles in shaping their research (Dowling, 2008). It is a process that turns the examiner into the examined. Moreover, reflexivity involves enacted practices where meaning is negotiated through discursive and semiotic means. These practices are linked to identity construction and achieved through interactional modes (Perez-Milans, 2017). Referring to my own work, reflexivity can be examined through the decisions taken in terms of how I designed my study, and how I chose, recruited and approached my participants. As the researcher, I have realized from the early stages of this project

that I would play a vital role in shaping the research outcomes and process. Lanza (2008) argues that the researcher's identity affects the research process at all stages: from selecting the sample to conducting the interviews and analysing the data. The researcher's gender, linguistic competence, relations with participants, educational level and ethnicity and so forth, all have an effect on how knowledge is made and constructed. Moreover, during the interview process, meanings are interactively co-constructed between the interlocutors. Although the interviewee is telling their own story, the talk is still directed to some extent by the interviewer's questions and research interests (Lanza, 2008; Richards, 2009). That is to say, the storyteller is narrating to an audience who is me (their colleague, the researcher, and a born Muslim) and to an expected audience who are researchers at a western institution, who will read their stories. The participants' relations with the researcher and the audience possibly affected what they may say and what they choose to conceal (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011; Murray, 2009).

Myerhoff and Ruby (1982: cited in Riessman, 2015) have introduced a model to illustrate how the researcher's reflexivity shapes the research. They argue that the researcher invests an interactional form to transform it into three components: producer, process and product. The producer is the generator of the form of discourse that is investigated: in my study, the converts and myself generated the interviews about their lives. On the other hand, the process refers to the epistemic stances and conceptual frames adopted in the study: in the case of my study, performativity and analytic model. Moreover, the product relates to the outcome of the research, my PhD thesis in this case (Riessman, 2015). I would add to this model the context as a prerequisite of these three components. The context is where the study is situated and started from the moment I considered it as a potential

research project, to the process of developing the framework and the research

design, and the spaces and time in which the interviews were conducted. All of these

shaped the producer. This can be illustrated in the following diagram:

2 Reflexivity
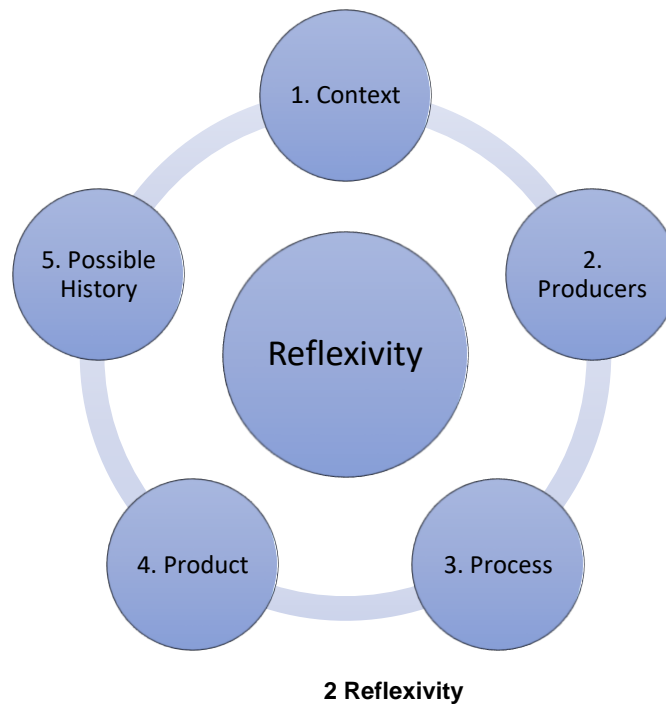
This diagram aims to summarize the model and the components I added to it. The

context starts with the historical dimension of meaning that made the researched

phenomena interesting to the researcher. This constitutes the producers, which are

the actual data: the recordings, transcriptions and notes. This interrelates with the

ontological and epistemological stances, which end up in a research output form: the

PhD thesis. Aligning with the constructivist perspective from qualitative research, in

this process, the researcher plays a very constitutive role in the production of

knowledge/substance. This includes my interests, knowledge and relations with

those who were researched and the audience (Riessman, 2015). All these constitute

possible discourses where identities are interactionally constructed, contested and

possibly subverted. This could construct possible meanings of selves that might be historicized and become meaningful for more dominant narratives. In other words, the product is historicized through text and audience perceptions, and is possibly constitutive of the research world; a world that could contain spaces for possible selves which could exercise reflexivity in a possible future. By this I mean that the product could extend beyond the research moment to a possible future, creating an intertextual reflexive cycle where meaning is interlaced with its histories and its histories are constituted by the process of constructing what is labelled as knowledge in the research processes. In the next section, I explain my position as a researcher.

4.6.1 Positioning the researcher

Another aspect of reflexivity is the connection between the researcher's awareness of his own experiences, beliefs, and attitudes and the processes of data interpretation. The researcher's subjective thinking greatly contributes to the output of the interpretation processes (Mann, 2011). That is, how researchers position themselves in relation to the research is critical to how they understand the analysis processes (Adams and Manning, 2015). Given that the narrative method in my study is ethnographically informed, as stated above, my experiences and attachment to the present study's informants necessitate an account of my reflexive thinking about my own experience of data collection and analysis. As a result, I see myself as an insider who is also being researched at various points throughout the analysis. Furthermore, there are times during the research process when I feel like an outsider, someone who is involved with research traditions that necessitate adopting a specific way of thinking, which makes me appear more concerned with the

theoretical framework and the research design. having set out the issues of reflexivity. In the next section, I shed light on the ethical issues and procedures relevant to the present study.

4.7 Ethical issues

Qualitative research in the social sciences brings varying degrees of ethical concerns. However, researchers are obliged to adhere to research ethics bound to three principles: beneficence, respect and justice. The first refers to the researcher's commitment to amplify benefit and limit harms. The second corresponds to the researcher's commitment to the participants' rights and protection. The final concerns an equality of the benefit/burden distribution (Fisher and Anushko, 2008). In my present work, I have developed a research ethical strategy that aims to adopt a research practice that aligns with these ethical principles. It aims to always consider the informants' needs and expectations. This is emphasized at the end of the analysis chapters by referring to the challenges they were encountering while the research was carried out. Hopefully, this could help them to have their voices heard. It also aims to demonstrate a maximum level of transparency by providing the informants with all the information about the research and the issues it addresses. It also commits to ensures anonymity and confidentiality of the informants to ensure the avoidance of consequential harm to the informants (King and Horrocks, 2010). I ensured the participants' rights and protections through the use of a consent form (refer to appendix 2) and an information sheet (refer to appendix 1). A well-informed consent form and an information sheet help in ensuring that the participants are made aware of any possible consequences that they may deem to be unwanted or harmful (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, I assured my participants that they can withdraw

from the study at any point and have the right not to answer any question that they find sensitive or harmful. I also provided full information about the privacy and anonymity procedure to my informants through the information sheet.

Moreover, the ethical procedure in the present study was reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE ethics committee. Additionally, permission was sought at the language centre where the interviews were conducted and approval was given.

4.8 Conclusion

in this chapter, I have shed light on the methodology followed to conduct the empirical part of the present study. I started with an overview of the philosophical bases. Then I introduced the research design. After that, I reflected on issues associated with reflexivity. This was followed by setting out the data analysis method. Finally, I illustrated the ethical issues for the present study. In the next chapter, I introduce the analysis of my first convert's conversion story.

Chapter 5: Abdulrahim

5.1 Introduction

The first case study features Abdulrahim. During my fieldwork with this informant, several features emerged in the narrative that pointed to the salience of race, religion and gender for Abdulrahim's identity, and I have included extracts of the data where I have found race, gender and religion to be indexed (See chapter 4, section 4.4.2). In the following sections, I begin Abdulrahim's story with an overview of his life. This is followed by an analysis of the five extracts of data that illustrate his conversion story in regard to the themes mentioned earlier. Finally, I conclude his story with a commentary on what the data suggest about his preferred identity.

5. 2 A biographical overview of Abdulrahim's story

Abdulrahim is an African-American who was born and raised in the United States, in housing commonly referred to as 'projects'. Projects are an American form of social housing built for economically disadvantaged people who cannot afford to buy property. He lived there with his parents and four siblings. He stated that his family were financially struggling, as his father was always in and out of different jobs. His mother was a housewife whom Abdulrahim used to help in taking care of his siblings. He used to attend a Jehovah's Witnesses church whose members were active in preaching in his area.

Although their financial situation was not stable, their religion was strong. His father was working hard to take the family outside the projects. To do so, he managed to enroll his children at a school outside the projects. He had to work long hours to

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provide for their needs; sometimes working two jobs at the same time. This led the family, according to him, to become less engaged in their religious activities. Consequently, Abdulrahim became less interested in religion and more interested in sexual adventures with girls during his adolescence. In Abdulrahim's late adolescence, his father managed to move them outside the projects. Abdulrahim then attended college to do a degree in Business and moved out of the family home to live on his own. However, he terminated his studies when he managed to secure a good job. He reported that he was always getting good jobs, one of which was for a military industrial company. Consequently, he managed to achieve a stable income which allowed him to buy a decent house in the city and secure all his needs. By the time he had done this, his friends who had continued their education were just about to start what he had already achieved. However, he reported that he did not agree with what he had done, and that if he had his time again, he would choose to continue with his degree.

In his twenties, Abdulrahim was busy with his career and his personal life (where sexuality was central). It was not until his late twenties that he decided to return to religion, as he felt that he was full of sin. He did not want to go back to the Jehovah's Witnesses because he did not like how they reacted when his father stopped attending. At the same time, two incidents occurred. First, he witnessed some of the social movements for Black People's dignity, which was associated with the Nation of Islam. Second, a film was released about Malcolm X, who seemed to have played a major role in Abdulrahim's conversion to Islam. Although Abdulrahim did not agree with the Nation of Islam's attitude towards white people, he found in the lives of Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali (the boxer) many commonalities with his own life – being black in a white world. This led him to start reading about Islam. He visited a

local mosque near to where he lived and started to learn about Islam from that mosque. Abdulrahim found out that there are different Islamic sects, but he identified more with *Salafism.* He took *Shahadah* at the mosque and started to gradually become a Muslim; he started learning about prayers, stopped eating pork, and abandoned his sexual adventures. After a trip to Mecca for *Hajj*, he decided to do *Hijrat*, which involves leaving a non-Muslim-majority country to go to a Muslim-majority country. He started his journey in Egypt. At the beginning, he seemed unhappy with the religious observance of Egyptians and thought about leaving to go to Morocco, but he was told by a Moroccan who he knew in the mosque where he used to learn Arabic and religious studies that 'it is worse in Morocco' (see Extract 4 below). He spent the first six months in Egypt just learning about his religion. By the time he ran out of his savings, he came to the idea of starting a teaching position. This was something he was told about by other Anglophone brothers in Egypt. While he was searching for a teaching job, he started thinking about getting married. In doing so, he asked those who he knew from the mosque (male converts) to help him. After a few meetings, he managed to meet a woman who he was happy with and felt satisfied about her religious commitment. He managed to get married and started his teaching career, thinking that this would help him to move to Saudi Arabia.

After living in Egypt for three and a half years, he managed to move to Saudi Arabia. The first teaching post he took was not satisfying. He took other positions in the rich Eastern and Western Provinces. He seemed to be satisfied with the time he spent there, especially when he was close to the Islamic cities of Mecca and Madinah in the Western Province. Due to the work policy in Saudi Arabia, which prevents non-Saudis from working for the government for more than ten years, Abdulrahim had to

move to another city, where he worked for a contractor for a public university. He seemed unhappy with his position in the new city, as he had moved to a less-developed city. During the time of my interviews, the Saudi government was implementing a work policy that aimed to cut the non-Saudi workforce by applying some taxation. Abdulrahim had four children – two sons and two daughters – and this policy would put financial pressure on him. Consequently, he said in the interviews that he was thinking about going back to Egypt. Having given an overview of Abdulrahim's life, I now begin applying the analytic model to the segments of his narrative selected for analysis. I start with the opening of Abdulrahim's narrative on his background.

5.3 The projects

The first extract of data comes from the start of interview 1. In response to a question about where he was born, Abdulrahim embarks on a story about the projects, a reference to state housing in the United States for those who cannot afford to own a house and are in a deprived situation.

Table 5 Extract 5.1 (AB: Abdulrahim and I: Ibrahim)

1	AB	I am American I was born in the projects if you ever heard of projects?
2	I	No.
3	AB	projects is typically is the place where all the poor people live /laugh/ in America
4		they give them free housing ok but it is not the best housing and they sort of
5		concentrated mostly Black People and some Latinos into this into these different
6		areas in New York, in Chicago, all over the United States so I grow up in a place
7		like this typically these types of places there is a lot of … drugs, crimes all
8		different types of bad things /laugh/ you know typically going on because people
9		are desperate so sometimes they don't have money and they have to do what
10		they have to do to get money they can't go into the suburbs you know outside of
11		the neighbourhood and do crimes because as soon as they go outside the police
12		would catch them so all the activities are primarily focused inside these
13		neighbourhoods you know so it is a little difficult you know growing up in a place
14		like this my parents were together all the time I was growing up so that was good

15		and I think that was very important … my father had various jobs it was sort of in
16		and out jobs he had one good and he tried to do something else and he could that
17		job and that didn't work out so he tried something else you know so that was
18		happening in the family and my mum was just a housewife and she was sick on
19		and off and pregnant on and off I am the first born so all the kids come after me so
20		I had to be I had to help her you know you know with the kids.
21	I	Do you mind if I ask you how many brothers and sisters do you have?
22	AB	have one brother and three sisters, my mother had during the course of my life
23		during that time she had maybe two miscarriage so she was pregnant a lot .
24	I	How about your parents Were they from the same area I mean?
25	AB	My parents grew up in the projects when the projects was first built that is where
26		they met each other so my father was best friend with my mother's brother you
27		know at a very young age (.) and he said he watched her sort of bloom into a
28		women /laughter/ you know and that when he became interested in her.
29	I	So he is much older than her.
30	AB	No no like the same age when you are a kid that situation you deal with the
31		brother as you are not really noticing the sister you know because you dealt with
32		the brother then he noticed the sister and of course there were some friction in
33		that but they got over it they ended up.
34	I	And they were married.
35	AB	And they got married and everything is cool you know.
36	I	So the jobs where your father was moving on and out did that affect the stability,
37		the financial stability?
38	AB	Sure, you know definitely affected the economics of the household you know
39		there is plenty of times we had something to eat but you know it was difficult (.)
40		you know it was difficult he started borrowing money you know it was difficult you
41		know we were religious though (.) I grew up as a Christian.

I begin the analysis by applying the first step of the analytic model by looking at the

'there and then' in his narrative account. As we can see in Extract 5.1, Abdulrahim

tells a story about the projects, the deprived place where he grew up. He starts his

story by referring to his nationality as an American and then to his childhood home in

America in the projects, where he orients his narrative. His ambiguous reference to

'they' appears to refer to someone or an entity who is authoritative, with the power to

provide housing and 'concentrate the Black People and some latinos' (line 5) in

these inadequate houses. He characterizes the projects as a place of 'drugs and

crime' (line 7), which the projects' inhabitants 'have to do' (line 9) as a way of living.

Abdulrahim uses the circumstantial modal 'have to' as if to say that they were

compelled to undertake these activities due to the limited possibilities of finding other

ways of earning money. Besides, the people who do these activities cannot go outside the projects (line 10), because the police would 'catch' them there. The use of the modal 'can't (line 10) draws a territorial space for the inhabitants of the projects, while the use of the adjective 'desperate' (line 8) points to Abdulrahim's stance on the projects. This is a stance that he generalizes using the adverb 'typically' (line 8) to indicate the commonality and the generic nature of these activities; a commonality that can also be traced in giving his account in the present tense, which could be seen as an example of what Baynham (2011) calls a generic narrative. He ends his generic narrative about the projects with an evaluative stance on growing up like this, saying that it was a 'little difficult' (line 13). This evaluative clause seems to serve as a coda, indicating where he wants to end his generic narrative about the projects as a place of desperate people, in which is difficult to grow up.

After representing the projects as a problematic and dangerous environment, Abdulrahim turns to his family. He starts by stressing the importance of his parents staying together (line 14) which he deems to be positive and in contrast to drug and criminal activities of the neighbourhood. After that, he turns to construct his family's affairs. He presents his father as 'in and out of jobs' (line 16), and his mother as a housewife who was often sick and pregnant (line 18) and himself, as the oldest sibling who was obliged to help his mother. What is interesting in Abdulrahim's account is his use of transitivity (Duranti, 1994) and modality (Narrog, 2012). Abdulrahim presents his father as agentive, using transitive verbs: 'he tried to do something' (line 16). As Duranti (1990) argues that using transitive verbs in an utterance contributes to the agency attributed to the subject. On the other hand,

Abdulrahim represents his mother as passive, describing her using the intransitive verb to be - she 'was just a house-wife', 'was sick' and 'was pregnant' (lines 18 and 19). The use of 'just' also serves to construct her as inagentive, at least in comparison with his father. Abdulrahim concludes this section of his story by explaining his role in helping his mother with the household (line 19), where he was, along with his family, constrained by the difficult situation that led him to play that role. In sum, Abdulrahim's account suggests two worlds: the bad (criminal and drugs) and the good (his family, his father's work ethic and his mother's caregiving). Within this dichotomy, Abdulrahim positions his family as 'desperate'.

In response to my question about his parents (line 24), Abdulrahim tells a story about how his father came to be interested in his mother. What is interesting in his account is his characterisation of heterosexual relationships. He presents his father as watching his mother 'bloom into a woman' (lines 27 and 28). This is another example of how transitivity contributes to the projection of agency, and what Duranti (1994) calls the agentive subject: the father is the agent, and the mother is the bloomed body. Furthermore, his father's access to Abdulrahim's mother was facilitated by his relationship with her brother, which Abdulrahim comments gave his father the chance to observe his mother. This accords with Bamberg (2004a), who reported that male narrators tend to present women as passive and men as agentive in relationships. This section of the interview is concluded with Abdulrahim positioning his family as religious: 'we were religious though' (line 41). This last utterance seems to have various functions. In the first place it acts as a coda to the personal narrative of being raised in the projects. In this coda, he revisits the idea of the projects through the 'good/bad world' binary, implying that being raised as religious is linked

to that good world. Secondly, the utterance functions as a transition to the main theme of religious conversion.

Having examined some the features of Abdulrahim's account of his childhood in the projects, I now turn to the next step of the analytic model and address the question of why he is telling this story (here and now). While Abdulrahim's narrative was triggered by my questions about the place in which he was born, his account enables him to construct his preferred identities from the outset of the interview. Abdulrahim portrays himself as an African working-class American who had a difficult childhood but one who was raised in a religious household. While life in the projects was difficult and desperate, desperation was overcome by doing good deeds, not engaging in criminal activities, the family being together and the father working hard. What is interesting is the portrayal of religion as a means of avoiding the criminality and desperation associated with the projects. In addition, Abdulrahim's account enables him to construct masculinity as agentive and in binary opposition to femininity as passive. This accords with studies in masculinities such as Cameron (1997), Coates (2003) and Bamberg (2004a) which have found that masculinity is central to being authoritative and agentive. In the next section, I examine another segment of Abdulrahim's narrative about white boys he knew.

5.4 White boys

Extract 5.2 arose during a discussion of his teenage years in which Abdulrahim said his father was working hard to get them out of the projects and his mother was busy taking care of his siblings; this caused them to be less engaged with religion. I probed this by asking him about his personal life and who he used to hang out with

in the projects. In his response, Abdulrahim told a story about his experience with

white people outside the projects, in which race and gender came to the fore.

Table 6 Extract 5.2 (AB: Abdulrahim and I: Ibrahim)

1	I	Can I refer to the projects here with whom you used to hang out to go.
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	AB	Everyone there was black they were all Black People (.) no white people may be there were three Puerto Rican families but that was it everyone also is black so all my experience basically growing up with Black People even with the Kingdom Hall (.) I really mean skin wise they were all Black People one of the things my father did is he made a point for us to go to school outside the projects that when I started experiencing white people I mean white kids because you know according to your zone that where you supposed to go to school and typically that is going to be in the black neighbourhood (.) he found a way /laughter/ to get us out as far as schooling is concern (.) and it .. for <u>me</u> aa it really expanded my horizon dealing with other people (.) typically big cities in America you have China town you have Arab town you have Jewish communities you know what I am saying (.) you know I experienced that when I got older (.) if I wanted a real Italian food I know the way to go you know the real Italian neighbourhood and get real Italian food I want Korean I want Japanese I want Chinese you can see the distinctions, you know the distinction you know the neighbourhoods you know emm … and when you dealing with white people as I was growing up (.) I realized you know that there is many different facets to them you know, Irish guy is not like an Italian guy an Italian guy is not like a Jewish guy (.) you know a Greek guy is not like an Italian guy everyone you know they have their own culture their own distinctions.
22	I	There are communities within.
23 24	AB	So I thought that was interesting and I was impressed and enjoyed it you know meeting with different people and dealing with different people.
25	I	You have that experience when you were at school.
26 27	AB	Yeah and hanging out with the kids after school because I could have a lot I could cut school a lot.
28 29	I	I expect them to be from a different neighbourhood I mean they are not from the projects.
30	AB	No they aren't.
31	I	were they still within what that if I could call that working class.
32 33 34	AB	Yeah middle class people you know basically everyone struggling in America they are trying to sustain themselves you know there is in a certain lifestyle (.) I wasn't with like rich white kids (.) you know just regular white kids.
35	I	Okay.
36 37 38	AB	And we were all and being young men we were all adventurous and we want to do different things good and bad and I was always down I was always okay so let's go let's do it you know /laughter/ and.
39	I	Ready to go as we say now.
40 41	AB	Ready to go and the girls off forget about it /laughter/ the girls you know they gave me access to a whole new stream of females you know.
42	I	In your school or the school outside.
43 44 45 46	AB	The school and hanging out with white boys (.) different groups of white boys aa so I was able to date to Jewish girls Italian girls German girls Irish girls and of course you know back when I go back to the projects black girls my black.

| 47 | | girlfriends Latino girls so it gave me access to more women as a young teenage man which is very important /laughter/. |

In the following, I apply the first step of the analytic model in order to explore how he constructed his story world. In this extract, Abdulrahim tells a story about those whom he used to hang out with in his adolescence. He brings in a story, which coheres with the experiences he has already recounted, where race and gender were inherently pervasive. He starts his narrative about the people he used to hang out with by repetitively racializing the projects: 'everyone is also black' (line 3). That is to say, he grew up among Black People and he only knew Black People. Even when it came to religious activities in the 'Kingdom Hall' (line 4), this still would be all black. It is worth noticing that in my question I asked about the people he used to hang out with in the projects. However, Abdulrahim intentionally wants to bring in another space where he used to meet people, and this was outside the projects, where he starts to tell a story about white boys outside the projects.

Abdulrahim begins his narrative about how he discovered the white boys' world outside the projects by reiterating the agentive role of his father as someone who decided on things like schooling. His father wanted them to be educated outside the projects. In this construction, his father's agency is projected using the same patterns as in Extract 5.1: the father 'made a point for us to go' (line 6); this is uttered with a recurrent absence of his mother's voice/role in the narrative. Being educated outside the neighbourhood allowed him to explore the world outside his territory – a diverse world containing different people, other than just black, where he then came to encounter white people. Abdulrahim finds dealing with these people expanded his horizon (lines 10 and 11). He moves on to elaborate about how he enjoyed his adventures outside the projects, taking food as an illustrative example (lines 13 and

15). Consequently, he knew that white people are diverse, noting that there are 'many different facets to them' (line 18), and referring to individual ethnically different types of 'guy' (line 19), which I assume is gendered as male by Abdulrahim. This diversity is, presumably, contrary to the Black People of the projects who seem to be homogeneous (mainly black, poor and desperate). His narrative suggests that there are two worlds in American cities: the projects, which are more homogenous (containing just Black People and some Latinos), and a diverse world outside the projects as the other end of the race binary as a 'white' world. This accords with Bucholtz and Hall (2004) who argue on how sameness and otherness is constructed by enacting the boundaries of between who is in and out of the group.

He then begins to move his narrative on to the white boys from school whom he used to hang out with. He starts his narrative about the white boys with a generic narrative about how people are financially struggling in America. This can be traced in his generic reference to 'everyone struggling in America' (line 32) 'to sustain themselves to a certain lifestyle' (lines 33 and 34). He is not just referring to the projects and its poverty but widens the difficult circumstances to the whole context of America where the middle class, according to his narrative, are struggling too. This stance towards the non-rich Americans could address the fact that there is a constraint to these struggles, which is not just the projects but possibly the wider capitalist status of American society. What is interesting in his account is his essentialization of ethno-cultural references and making them class related.

He then shifts his narrative to a more personal one, which he began by presenting himself and his peers, the 'young men', as 'adventurous' (line 36). Then he elaborates about what he and his peers used to do. With some hesitations, he starts with the reference 'we' (line 36), which can be used, according to Potter and Speers

(2002), to collectively group voices to enact commonality; then he shifts to the more generic reference 'being young men', as if this is a common narrative among young males. He then states that they generally used to do good and bad things (line 37) presumably resembling the good and bad mentioned earlier in his narrative. This is followed by constructing himself as courageous: 'always down' and 'let go let's do it' (line 38).

After this prologue, Abdulrahim launches his main theme, which is talking about the girls. I feel that he is preparing me before introducing the sexual part of the story by recounting a generic narrative about young men in America and about himself being courageous. This shows how Abdulrahim's narrative was constrained by the context. The narrative is being recounted to a Muslim-born male and I feel that Abdulrahim is constrained by what is perceived to be improper. At the same time, he is bragging and showing off about his sexuality. His relationship with white females had been channelled through his relationship with the white boys: 'they gave' him 'access' (lines 40 and 41). Therefore, he was able to date all types of white girls. The same patterns as in his parents' story are repeated: women are objectified as inagentive actors in the male world inhabited by him and his young male peers. He refers to girls as females which may suggest they are seen in terms of (male) biological natural drives. It is also a way of aggrandising himself in interaction with another male (me) who he assumes understands this biological urge he sees as natural for all men. He had been given access to different types of white girls (Jewish, Italian, Irish… [line 44]) by white boys, and when he was back in his own territory (the projects), he had his black and Latino girls (lines 45 and 46). He then moves to evaluatively reflect on this story in his last utterance, as he takes a stance on his access to more women, describing it as 'important' (line 46). This stance reveals how

his narrative seems to objectify women as an important object that he could access (the white girls) or own (the girls in the projects) as a young courageous man. As mentioned above, this shows how Abdulrahim constructed a male-dominated heterosexuality where female actors were passivized, which again accords with Bamberg (2004a). What is also interesting in his account here is how he enacts his relationship with other girls through other males, which I feel is brought in relevance in the context of the interview. And I would suggest that this would most likely be enacted differently with other interviewers in different sittings.

Having analysed how Abdulrahim constructed his story and positioned its characters, I now move on to apply the second step of the analytic model and look at the question of why he is telling this story. Although I do not directly index any reference to women in my question about who he used to hang out with nor to spaces outside the projects, Abdulrahim appears to be intentionally bringing in the story about the white people outside the projects to construct a very strong sense of being black. It was as if he was saying: I am black and I belong to the projects. I had my black girlfriends there, while there was that diverse world of white people outside where I could access the white girls by knowing white boys. There are two spaces in this part of the narrative, and it seems that within these two spaces, he wants to be seen as black. Also, he intentionally brings in the story about girls in order to construct a hyper masculine identity in which he seems to position himself and other males as agentive with regards to 'girls'. Overall, I find that he prefers to be seen by me as a heterosexual black male who is always dominant in relationships with women. Abdulrahim's sense of himself as black played a major role in how he came to encounter Islam. This is the main theme of the next section.

5.5 The Black man in a white man's world

In this section, I analyse an extract from Abdulrahim's narrative in which he tells his story about his first encounter with Islam. Before he started telling this story, he narrated his development from his teenage years to his twenties; he told me that he managed to attend college to do a business degree. When he was nineteen, he decided to live on his own and started to work while he was studying. Then he decided to focus on his occupation and terminated his degree course. He said that he always had good jobs that enabled him to secure all his needs and that all his focus was on his leisure time and work. He was not concerned about his religion although he still kept his faith. This is how he progressed until his late twenties. It was at this point that he started his narrative about his first encounter with Islam.

Table 7 Extract 5.3 (AB: Abdulrahim and I: Ibrahim)

1	AB	There was a movie about Malcolm X if you are familiar with Malcolm X.
2	I	Who.
3 4	AB	Okay, Malcolm X was a very popular political black activist in the seventies, sixties and seventies.
5	I	Okay I know who he is.
6	AB	There is a couple of different guys this particular one is Malcolm X.
7	I	I know Malcolm X.
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	AB	Okay his story was coming out there is a book about him by Alex Haley and movie came out about his life (.) and it is sort of aspirational you know because we had similar backgrounds went through similar things (.) I looked at Mohammad Ali the boxer also similar situations as black men in America in his journey (.) and then there was this they called the million man million man march in Washington DC that was organized by this guy Louis Farrakhan in the Nation of Islam (.) this particular group Nation of Islam is very big and very popular in America.
16	I	In the sixties isn't it?
17	AB	Up till now.
18	I	Up till now.
19 20 21 22 23 24 25	AB	Up till now very big very popular lot of money and they organized this march in Washington for black rights in I think it was the nineties (.) so me and a friend of mine we went to the march (.) because even though I was able to deal with Black People and Latino people I could still deal with white people too but I am the black man in a white man world that is the reality of it okay I have white friends and we are good together do things (.) but when it comes down to I am the black man in America and it is not easy /laughter/
26	I	Okay.

27	AB	so they organized this particular march in Washington to sort of protest for
28		rights and dignity police killing Black People you know even up till now almost
28		weekly things were hard things were tough and it was not right you know so we
29		feel oppressed of course because we are oppressed (.) so all of these things
30		sort of hit me at the same time (.) and this particular group in the Nation of Islam
31		we call now the nation of ignorance they claim to be Muslim and there is many
32		different groups in America they claim to be Muslim (.) this particular group is
33		not (.) at the time I was thinking of going back into Christianity (.) but I didn't feel
34		comfortable because a lot of things that my father went through in the group
35		when he stopped going they really like dissociated with him and made him feel
36		like outsider I didn't like that (.) and I didn't agree with certain aspects of the
37		group you know so I said I am not going back to be with Jehovah Witness (.) but
38		I see this group Nation of Islam they are popular you see them in the
39		neighbourhood helping poor people they would stop people from dealing drugs
40		in the corner they open up stores and shops they are very so social active (.)
41		and I liked that and I thought that is a good thing and I thought about going to
42		that group based on that so I started thinking to their lectures buying some of
43		their books and materials (.) and what I found out was from one of their main
44		books which is called message to the black man from this guy Elijah
45		Mohammad this particular book is the *'Aqīdah* book.
46	I	What.
47	AB	*'Aqīdah.*
48	I	Was it Message to Islam?
49	AB	Message to a black Man.
50	I	Okay.
51	AB	In this book /laughter/ they say that this man Elijah Mohammad who wrote this
52		book is a messenger I didn't know any better then they said his teacher is *Allāh*.
53	I	*Allāh*?
54	AB	Yeah, another man, now you say you are messenger I didn't know any better
55		you are just saying this guy is god (.) this didn't make any sense to me then in
56		this book they also say that white people all white people are devils and all
57		Black People are gods and that Black People came from another planet another
58		solar system in a space ship landed on this planet and that is how we got here
59		(.) white people are from animals dogs mix of dogs pig rats like this that is why
60		you may see white people they have grey eyes their hair is straight like dogs it
61		is brown or grey like any animals their eyes are in different colours like animals
62		(.) they descended from animals therefore they are *Shayāṭīn* /laughter/
63	I	Interesting.
64	AB	And this was their concepts they came up the sixties when Black People where
65		really getting hammered so they basically took they took Christian concept and
66		make it black (.) this guy is god this guy is Jesus (.) it is the same thing basically
67		and they put Islamic twist on it you know even (.) I didn't know anything about
68		Islam but I know this is crazy /laughter/ I know this was crazy so I didn't get
69		involved in this group I rejected that.

I begin the analysis of this story by applying the first step of the analytic model and

looking at how Abdulrahim constructed his story world. As previously stated, this

segment tells the story of Abdulrahim's encounter with Islam. He begins this part of

his narrative by introducing two events that lay behind his first encounter with Islam. These events are the movie about Malcolm X and the one-million-man march in Washington DC organized by Louis Farrakhan from the Nation of Islam. Abdulrahim also finds a similarity between the life journeys of Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali and his own. They all had a similar background and went through similar things (line 10). They are all African-American and were raised in poor neighbourhoods; they encountered Islam after being affected by the prevalent racism in the United States. He then uses the evaluative term 'aspirational' (line 9) to reflect on his encounter with this African-American figures. It is aspiration in a sense that led him to follow the same journey. This leads to the second event when the Nation of Islam, which Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali used to be associated with during their life journey, organized the march in Washington DC in which he and his friend participated. In Abdulrahim's narrative, this march was an action by black men to assert Black People's dignity.

His narrative shifts from the two events to his own experience when he begins recounting his personal narrative about the African-American struggle in the United States. He ascribes his participation in the march to the racial circumstantial constraint, which African-Americans are forced to encounter. He reports that he was able to deal with Americans from different backgrounds (black and white), using the circumstantial modals 'able to' and 'could' (line 21). However, his relationship with white Americans was affected by the circumstantial constraint of being 'the black man in a white man world' (line 23). He ends his narrative by taking a stance oriented to his experience of being black in the American white world, describing it as 'not easy' (line 25). The evaluative element in his utterance is emphasized by his laughter, which I perceive to serve as an intensifier of his stance. Moreover, the

circumstance of the black struggle in the United States is explicated by the brutality of American police against Black People and how this was persistent. This is followed with a moral stance, evaluating it as 'not right' (line 28). He then positions Black People alongside him as oppressed (line 29). His account seems crucial to understanding how he presented himself within the binary of black/white and his feelings of marginalisation in his home country.

Abdulrahim then moves on to elaborate about the Nation of Islam. From the beginning, he distances himself from this group by stigmatizing it as 'nation of ignorance' (line 31), which indicates a negative assessment. He reports that the Nation of Islam claims to be Muslim, as do many other groups in the US, but Abdulrahim disaligns himself from this group by labelling them as not Muslim (line 32). I find that this position taken by Abdulrahim is pertinent to his admiration of Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali who had been down the same path. They knew about Islam from the Nation of Islam and disassociated themselves from the group later on in their life course. Abdulrahim is reiterating their position in his narrative. He then reports that he thought about going back to Christianity – the belief he was still holding but not engaged with. However, he was not satisfied because of the way Jehovah's Witnesses followers had treated his father after he became less engaged in their activities. This shows how Abdulrahim's father is central to how he constructed his narrative. Because of his father's experience with Jehovah's Witnesses, he decided not to go back to Christianity (line 33).

After Abdulrahim enacts this position towards both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Nation of Islam by distancing himself from them, he begins narrating how he noticed the Nation of Islam, rhetorically utilizing the present tense to establish a factual recount, engaged in good activities: helping poor people, opening shops and

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stopping people from dealing drugs (lines 39 and 40). This, he suggests, is the reason behind their popularity (line 38). Presumably, he is referring to the black neighborhood and possibly the projects which, by that time, he and his family moved away from. In other words, the Nation of Islam helps poor Black People to overcome the constraints of poverty and to survive the difficult circumstances in America which he has mentioned earlier in his narrative (see section 5.3 above). Abdulrahim positions himself on an affective scale (Du Bois, 2007) in taking a stance on the Nation of Islam's activities in helping poor Black People: 'I liked that and I thought that is good' (line 40). His affective stance is conveyed by the use of the first-person pronoun and the verb 'like' is reinforced with his moral stance assessing what they do as 'good'. Again, Abdulrahim constructs himself as agentive in stance taking. Because of the good that the Nation of Islam does to the poor, he decided to learn about them (lines 41 and 42). He then elaborates more about their faith, referring to their main text or '*'Aqīdah* book', the Message to the black Man.

Abdulrahim's usage of the Arabic term '*Aqīdah'* (line 45), which means creed, shows how he wants to signal affinity with me, in what I would call an aphoristic formulation of conventional Muslim talk. After that, he starts to elaborate more about their belief. It seems that he was not satisfied with two things: first, their manipulation of some Christian concepts and the status of Elijah Mohammed as a messenger, which deviates from mainstream Islam (lines 51 to 54). Second, he was not happy with the concepts they have about white people descending from animals as a product of demonic intervention. Abdulrahim takes an epistemic stance towards both facts (Du Bois, 2007) by using the epistemic elements 'I didn't know any better' (line 51) and 'I know this is crazy' (lines 66 and 67). It also could be argued that 'I didn't know any better' is by way of explanation to me for even talking to these people (who both of

us know today to be heretical in terms of orthodox Islam), whereas 'I know this is crazy' is indeed a clear epistemic stance with regard to their beliefs. Therefore, his epistemic stance is about his lack of knowledge (negative) and his possession of enough knowledge (positive) to assess their erroneous beliefs and consequently rejecting this belief (line 68). This last statement serves as a coda for his story about his first encounter with Islam.

I now move on to step two the analytic model and address the question of why Abdulrahim constructs his story about his first encounter with Islam in this way and what preferred identities he wants to enact. Abdulrahim picks up themes that are meant to be representative of his life story and populates them with characters and places to make himself appear to be someone who experienced racism and became engaged in the black rights struggle. It could be argued that racism and possibly the racialization of Islam in the United States affected how he came to encounter Islam. It seems that he wants to take an activist position by narrating this story, as he was involved with the march to demand black rights and dignity. Then he was influenced by the social rights black Muslim activists (Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali), which led him to learn more about the Nation of Islam. He started to become interested in the Nation of Islam, which he later rejected after learning more about their belief. Then he thought about returning to Christianity. These events serve to make Abdulrahim appear as a male black activist who finds in religion the empowerment to overcome marginalization and the hope of securing black dignity. In this enactment, we can trace how he wants to appear to always be an agentive male. This is evident in how he narrates the march story as the men's claim to Black People's dignity and his reference to his father, who seems to be integral to how he constructed his narrative.

These identities that are assumed by Abdulrahim begin to change when he starts to narrate his story about his life after he become a Muslim. While he still maintains a firmly pious male identity, his blackness and agency became less visible, as seen in the next extract after he moved away from the United States.

5.6 *Hijrat*

Seeking to learn more about Islam, Abdulrahim contacted a local mosque and he eventually converted to Islam. His conversion was followed with changes to his life; he abandoned his name, and he got a new name that reflected his new belief. After that, he did the Islamic pilgrimage (*Hajj*). After doing *Hajj*, he decided to migrate from the non-Muslim-majority country to a Muslim country. This is a traditional Islamic practice (done first by Prophet Mohammed). This practice is historically known as a *Hijrat* (religious migration). In the following extract, I analyse Abdulrahim's story about his migration or *Hijrat* to Egypt.

Table 8 Extract 5. 4 (AB: Abdulrahim and I: Ibrahim)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	**AB**	When I was in Saudi you just concentrate in making *Hajj* and you know getting to Egypt now you are looking at life and what you get to do (.) I had enough money I didn't have to work so I want to concentrate and try to learn some Arabic and continue learning Islam (.) so going to the classes (.) but the environment turn me off and coming where I came from I was able to see things going on that other brother maybe didn't notice (.) you know I can tell that these guys over there they hustle they are selling drugs for sure, that is a hooker /laughter/ the way she is walking in the street that's a hooker.
9	**I**	In Egypt.
10 11	**AB**	In Egypt I notice syringes on the floor I notice bottle of whisky on the floor I notice all the stuff going on around me.
12	**I**	I have never been to Cairo.
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	**AB**	And it bothered me not to mention the poverty , we have poverty in America but not in the crushing poverty you see outside America, people in America don't know what poverty is they really don't I mean some places okay bad (.) it is really bad people may eat bread all day it hurts, it hurts me as a Muslim it hurts me as a human being because Islam is supposed to be better than this we are supposed to be better than this (.) yet I see these stuff going on and after two weeks I am ready to get out of there as I forget the six months thing (.) I am out of here I will get to Morocco to see what is going on over there (.) again I don't know anything but it happened to be a few students in the *Masjid* who are

22		Moroccans so I started talking to them and ask them tell them look I am not
23		really feeling in Egypt I am thinking about going to Morocco and see how it is
24		there, they would say look Abdulrahim why do you think we are here (.) they
25		said **it is bad here (.) woman go out with *Tabarouj* and see drugs (.) it is**
26		**worse in Morocco it is worse (.) there is more drugs more women walking**
27		**around with nothing in their head , t shirts and blue jeans and the *Dīn* is**
28		**disaster there is no *Salafiah* going on over there** (.) they **said look that is**
29		**why we are here**.
30	I	So they are escaping.
31	AB	They are escaping that and I got the brothers the American brother the British
32		brother **Abdulrahim we understand, be patient stay we will help you be**
33		**patient** I said okay man I will stick it out , and that is what I did and I am glad I
34		did so I ended up staying in Egypt three and a half years and that is good (.)
35		there were some Egyptians who helped me a lot one particular friend of mine
36		really helped me who was an Egyptian brother he passed away suddenly a few
37		years ago (.) he helped me a lot (.) up to the point he was the landlord of the
38		building all his family in the building you know (.) but they rented out two
39		apartments in the first floor (.) when I ran out of money he let me stay there rent
40		free for months he had a little store (.) he allowed me to work on the register
41		because he trusted me (.) among of some of the other guys he trusted me on
42		the register and that is what I did I wanted to go back into the field that I did in
43		America trying to get to see jobs or something similar but it just was not
44		available and Egypt is for Egyptian, Saudi is for Saudi they are going to get the
45		first opportunity so I realized I noticed brothers are teaching English so that is
46		why I went there not because I loved it but because I had to (.) to work to live to
47		survive and it just happens that you can make good living doing it not great
48		money but you make enough to survive but it was difficult getting a job.
49	I	Was it.
50	AB	I went to places (.) most of the schools are run by Christians so when I walked
51		in there it was over bro.
52	I	Was it .
53	AB	So when they see my beard it was over even my friend is working there but he
54		may have a light beard his beard was not growing in you know and he is telling
55		me **Abdulrahim come to my school we got three opening British side the**
56		**American side we got three opening and the American side we got two**
57		**opening we need teachers come come** and I go there and the woman walks
58		in the lobby and she looks at me and looks up at the sky and it was over.

At the beginning of this extract, Abdulrahim shifts his narrative from his pilgrimage

story and starts telling his story about migrating to Egypt. Following the analytic

model, his migration story is analysed by first applying step one and unpack the

'there and then' in his narrative account. In this story, Abdulrahim refers to

characters and arranges them in time and space, while he enacts positions and

takes stances showing the preferred identities he is constructing. He starts reporting

that he managed to save some money to live for a while without needing to look for work, because he wanted to concentrate on learning some Arabic and continue learning about Islam. However, he faced the circumstantial constraint of 'the environment' (line 5). He faced things that were not welcomed and unexpected by him. These things resemble the bad things he has reported in the projects earlier in his narratives – drugs, drug dealers and 'hookers'. In this story, he positions himself as knowledgeable, and that his knowledge comes from the experience he had in the projects: 'coming where I came from I was able to see things going on' (lines 5 and 6). He uses what is termed epistemic modality (Narrog, 2012), 'able to', in constructing his position as knowledgeable. He then refers to the brothers (line 6), who I assume to be religious and involved in the Arabic or religious classes, who lacked knowledge about this and 'maybe didn't notice' (line 6), which could indicate that they are reciprocally positioned as not knowledgeable. This stems from his use of the mental state epistemic verb 'notice', which expresses possibility of knowledge (Narrog, 2012). Moreover, the way in which he objectifies and stigmatizes the female body through his use of the term 'hooker' (line 8) renders the female body as problematic, whereas the female body is rendered as desirable in the white boys' story in section 5.3. This tells us about the transition in his identity and his view of the world. Following this, he takes his stance on this environment by positioning himself on an affective scale as 'bothered' (line 13). Interestingly, women who did not cover their heads and did not follow religious dress codes were categorized alongside the social problems of drugs. This shows the pervasive type of masculinity his enacting in this construct and repeatedly in the previous sections, However, it might be argued that this is an indication of a masculinity which is now – according to his understanding of Islam – underpinned by religious authority.

In addition, he elaborates more about this new environment in referring to the topic of poverty (lines 13 and 14). He follows that by taking a moral stance, saying that it 'hurts' him (line 16). In these stances on the new environment in Egypt, he uses emotional verbs ('bothered', 'hurts') that indicate more emotion than his previous positions on social ills earlier in his narrative before he became a Muslim. Abdulrahim then starts to construct his new Muslim identity by his references to Islam (line 17) and 'we' (line 17), as in 'we' should 'be better than this' (lines 17 and 18). This shows how he aligns himself with other Muslims including me. It seems that the social ills were previously constructed by him in his narrative in terms of 'desperation', whereas social ills in the Muslim world are an additional source of pain – given his understanding of Islam (and perhaps as a recent convert) leads him to have higher expectations of a setting in which Islam is the dominant religion. His *Hijrat* is in fact initially disappointing.

After encountering this new environment, he thought that he should leave Egypt: 'I am ready to get out of there' (line 19) and thought about moving to another Muslim country (line 20). Abdulrahim then starts to tell a story about Moroccan students (line 22) who he consulted about moving to Morocco – he refers to them as students rather than brothers. Abdulrahim rhetorically recounts the environment in Morocco by reporting the speech of the Moroccan students; they told him that the environment in Morocco is worse than Egypt; what he did not like was already there in Morocco: drugs and women who are not dressing religiously – they wore jeans and t-shirts (lines 25 to 27). He describes these women using the Arabic word '*Tabarouj*' (line 25). In addition, *Dīn* (line 27), which means belief, is not what he would expect as *Salafiah* (Salafism) is not common (line 27) there. I reflected on this story as positioning them as if they had also considered escaping, which was his perception

too. This seems to suggest that he positions himself and these brothers as strugglers.

Then he refers to the British brother (a student) who was supportive in asking him to be patient and offering to help him to adjust to the new circumstance (lines 31 to 33). Again, he recounts that experience by reporting speech. He shifts his position from someone who is agentive in wanting to quit (line 19) to someone who is guided and submissive, and whose agency is more diffused (De Fina, 2003; Besnier, 1992) through his contact with other characters in his story Consequently, Abdulrahim decided to stay and deems that this was the right decision: 'I am glad I did so' (line 33). He later introduces another character, 'an Egyptian brother' (line 36) who guided and helped him, especially when he ran out of money. The Egyptian brother offered him free accommodation (line 39) after Abdulrahim ran out of money.

He then starts to narrate about his search for a job, in which he positions himself as an outsider. This is when he was constrained by the role of nationality in hiring practices in host countries: 'Egypt is for Egyptian, Saudi is for Saudi' (line 44). Locals, he realises, are going to get the first opportunity. Therefore, he struggled in finding a similar job to the one he used to have in America (line 43). Nevertheless, the Egyptian brother offered him work on the cash register in his shop, because he trusted him (line 40) more than other people. While he was working for the Egyptian, he noticed that some brothers (I assume they are Anglophne) teach English (line 45). Therefore, he applied for the teaching job 'not because I loved it but because I had to' (line 46). He uses a circumstantial modal 'had to', which indicates how he was constrained by the job circumstance and did what he had to do to survive.

This was not an easy matter for him; he was again constrained by other hiring issues, where his embodiment of a religious identity made it difficult to secure a

teaching post. He reflects on this experience by taking the stance that it was difficult (line 46). He then elaborates by recounting a story about an application for a post at a school run by Christians. He was not offered the job, he claims, because of his long beard (line 53), although he had a friend who worked for that school who had a shorter beard than him – I wonder here about his friend's background, whether he is Caucasian or of African descent. In this part of his story, he again uses reported speech when explaining how his friend had told him about the post and how he was rejected by the woman when she met him. He positions himself as subjected to her gaze: she 'looks at me and looks up at the sky and it was over bro' (lines 50 and 51). The woman is placed as an agentive subject in the transitive structure of his utterance, and he is objectified as inagentive in the scene. He did not secure the post, he claims, because of how he had been judged by a non-Muslim woman regarding his religious appearance, which he believes added to his struggles in Egypt. Interestingly, I was included as a fellow Muslim in the interaction when he used 'bro', thereby placing me in alignment.

The analysis now turns to the next step of the analytic model, in which I aim to analyse what preferred identities he brought about by telling this story. In this part of his narrative, it is noticeable that Abdulrahim's sense of blackness is not indexed. This is contrary to his earlier narratives when he was in America. It is as if he wants here to enact a new identity. In order to understand this new brought-about identity, I would refer to the moral stance he takes to the new environment (lines 16 and 17). Here, he wants to present himself as a Muslim and a human being as the most salient aspects of himself, which here might be said to eclipse his identity as an African-American. Here he positions himself as belonging to a new group (the Muslim brothers). This possibly explains the shifts in his narrative style where he

starts to use reported speech (lines 23 to 28 and 31 to 32), which according to De Fina (2003) and Besnier (1992) is an element that indicates how the speaker diffuses agency and assigns alignment among the story world's characters. He reports what the students say, aligning himself with them. The emotional verbs he utilizes in his utterances when he takes a stance on the new environment also clarifies how he prefers to be seen. In addition, he presents himself as a struggler because of the disappointment with Egypt and the fact that his job opportunities are constrained by hiring practices regarding foreigners and those who are visibly Salafist. The struggler identity he brought about in this construct differs from how it is constructed in his life before Islam. Here it is related to employment, religion and disappointment with aspects of the Muslim world (e.g., drug taking, women dressing in ways he considers inappropriate), while earlier is rendered around racism. Finally, within these constructs, he still brings in a hyper masculine identity, which is pervasive throughout his narrative. This is evident in the way he describes the female body and the way it is positioned as something disturbing for him, and the way he is objectified under the female gaze, indicate the construction of what might be called an increasingly toxic form of masculinity, which will become more apparent in the next extract. In this, I analyse the last segment of Abdulrahim's narrative for this chapter in which he tells a story about the linguistic practices in his household in which religion and gender are shown to intersect.

5.7 I like the feel of having an Arab wife whose English is messed up

In this last section on Abdulrahim's narrative, I analyse a story that Abdulrahim told about the linguistic practices in his household. Before starting the analysis, I want to give a brief overview about what he was recounting before he brought this story into

his narrative. After he started looking for a teaching job, he had the idea of getting married. He made a few proposals and ended up marrying a Palestinian Egyptian whose brother he knew. He started his teaching profession in Egypt where he lived for three and a half years. Then he found a series of teaching jobs in different cities in Saudi Arabia, and by the time I interviewed him he had been working there for about twelve years. Abdulrahim told me that he can barely speak even basic Arabic even though he is married to an Arab speaker, had attended Arabic classes and had been living in Arabic-speaking countries for fourteen years. Abdulrahim told me how he used to attend religious classes that were delivered in Arabic and mediated with an English translator for those who cannot fully understand Arabic. I probed him about this, wondering how he had not managed to master Arabic while being married to an Arab woman. Our exchange on this ends with the following story:

Table 9 Extract 5. 5 (AB: Abdulrahim and I: Ibrahim)

1	**I**	Your wife is a native Arab how come that you didn't pick up from her?
2 3	**AB**	/laughter/ You know what happens like I told you before the wife follows the husband, you know typically.
4	**I**	So.
5 6 7 8 9 10	**AB**	so she follows me she picks up English her English is a lot better now compared to when we first met /laughter/ but what I do because I like the feel of having an Arab wife whose English is messed up I don't correct that I don't correct that and I sometimes I say stuff to her wrong because I like her saying it that way /laughter/ you know what I mean but she doesn't speak Arabic to me I try to get her do every once and while.
11	**I**	Your kids do they speak good Arabic.
12	**AB**	Yeah my kids are in *Taḥfīẓ al-Qur'ān.*
13	**I**	What about English.
14 15	**AB**	Their English is good they better, they are number one in their class they are good enough.
16	**I**	They communicate with you in English.
17 18	**AB**	All the time, they look at me they talk in English they look at their mother they talk Arabic just like that.
19	**I**	That is very interesting.
20 21	**AB**	They come home from school tell their mother what happen in school I understand it and then I say what happened and they tell me in English
22 23	**I**	How do you feel about English here: which of these two languages are more important for them?

24 25 26	AB	I think the Arabic is more important for them primarily because of the *Dīn* that was going to assist them going into the *Jannat* you know and their language that is what is around them all the time that is what they get first and foremost.
27	I	From the way you speak I imagine to be native Arabs than native English.
28 29 30	AB	Yeah more than anything else , yeah because they speak it all the time my kids the boys in *Taḥfīẓ al-Qur'ān* the girls are in regular Saudi school so the boys have been , my son ******** is almost finished with Quran.

I now look at how Abdulrahim constructed his story world by applying the first step of the analytic model. Abdulrahim mainly refers in this construct to his family members: himself (line 2), his wife (line 2), his children (line 12) and his older son (line 30). He starts his narrative when he responds to my probe (line 4) by reiterating how he perceives the relationship between a wife and husband, whereby 'the wife follows the husband' (lines 2 and 3). He perceives this gender relation to be generic, taking a stance on this relation using the adverb 'typically' which, as discussed in above, shows how he generalizes and naturalizes the gender roles – the male is the agentive actor, and the female is the submissive subject to the male desire. In his construct, he seems to be saying: I speak English and therefore my wife follows me and does so too. Then he elaborates more about how he controlled his wife's English: 'I like the feel of having an Arab wife whose English is messed up' (line 6 and 7). Although this seems to be told as a joke between men, it tells a lot about how he positions his wife not just as a submissive subject who follows him, but as a product of his control. He intends to keep her English messed up, 'I don't correct her' (line 7), and the way he teaches her, 'I say stuff to her wrong' (line 8), tells us how she is rendered as an object that he controls. That he feels entitled to say this to another male, regardless of the response this may invoke, is significant. It is clear that he reads me as someone who would understand such behavior and see the 'joke', which it is accompanied by laugher (line 2) in what he is doing with his wife's

English. My disapproval is not anticipated, otherwise he would be risking a loss of face as a moral being. This suggests several things: first, he establishes himself as the dominant masculine actor to whom his narrative realm is subjected. Second, it may be that maintaining his wife's corresponding lack in English is a means whereby he may ensure that she remains inferior to him in this area. It also reveals how much agency he proclaims for himself and how he positions his wife as inagentive and submissive, and it reveals his understanding of masculinity as collusive (between men) in which the maintenance of women's inferiority is understood, shared and perpetuated.

Then we move to talk about his children. He replied to my question by telling me that they attend a Quranic school, '*Taḥfīẓ al-Qur'ān*, which means that they are taught more intensive classes on the Quran and Arabic. When I asked him about English, he reported that they are better than the other local Arabs in their class when it comes to English: 'they are good enough' (lines 14 and 15) in English at the Quranic school. Using the quantifier 'enough' suggests that he positions his children to be native in Arabic and placed English as a language that they are good enough at – possibly a second language. Then he elaborates more about the linguistic practices in his household and how his children shift languages between him and his wife. They speak English with him and speak Arabic with their mother (line 17). When I asked him which of the two languages is more important for them, he replied 'Arabic'. He ascribes its importance to their religion: 'the *Dīn'* (line 24), which would help them go to paradise, 'the *Jannat'* (line 25), which is the ultimate goal for all Muslim believers: Arabic is their gate to that. Besides, Arabic is the dominant language where they lived: 'that is what they get first and foremost' (line 26). After that, he elaborates more about his children's schooling. He told me that the boys are

at a Quranic school, 'the boys in *Taḥfīẓ al-Qur'ān* the girls are in regular Saudi school' (line 29). This again brings in another question about why the boys attend the Quranic school while the girls attend the public one. This seems to align with his male-centric narrative, which suggests, though this lacks justification in his narrative, that he deems religious knowledge as a male attribute.

Having examined how Abdulrahim positioned his characters in this construct, I move on to step two in my analytic model, where I try to unpack how he wants to be seen. It seems that Abdulrahim brought in these stories about linguistic practices in his household in a particular way, positioning himself as the agentive male and his wife as the submissive female, alongside the story about his sons being at a Quranic school while his daughters are at public ones. All these positions tell us how he constructs himself as a thoroughly masculine actor in his male-centric narrative world. All these constructs show that he claims control and the ability to decide how things are, even his wife's language. This seems to align with the common local public perception of the masculine subject. Masculinity, in the Saudi Bedouin context – especially in relation to the female subject, is centered on the ability to be in control (see section 1.3.6 chapter 1). Abdulrahim's account revolves around his self-positioning as someone who controls and dominates the women in his life which, given the particularities mentioned, indicates the toxic nature of the masculinity he had been enacting. In addition, his narrative about his children's schooling also suggests that he wanted to be seen as someone whose Islamic identity is the most salient. He raised his children to be native Arab speakers, as it is important for their *Dīn* (religion) and having an Arab wife indicates that he wanted to be seen as part of this world. At the same time, in his construct, I feel that I was read and positioned in alignment with him as a Muslim male who would understand his actions with regard

to his wife and children. According to Kiesling (2005), this is also an exemplar of doing male solidarity, in which male subjects engage in homosocial practices.

5.8 Concluding remarks on Abdulrahim's narrative

In this section, I highlight the significant features of Abdulrahim's narrative and the preferred identities that Abdulrahim brought about when he constructed his account. Abdulrahim drew on different rhetorical practices in constructing his story. He shifts his narrative from generic to personal in recounting his experiences, which aligns with Baynham's (2011) findings. He also utilizes different rhetorical practices in projecting agency through grammatical transitivity in the argument structure, as in Duranti (1994), to reported speech, as in De Fina (2003), Hill and Zepede (1992) and Besnier (1992). In addition, he takes stances where he uses evaluative elements such as intensifiers in order to position the characters of his story. All these were common practices he draws on in constructing his story, in which he appears to use these narrative and rhetorical practices to enact his preferred identities at the moment of interaction. The identities he brings to his narrative are context attentive and pertinent to the moment of interaction between him and me. They are momental and I do not wish to suggest that general propositions about him can be made. Rather, I aim to summarise what appears to be important representations of himself while he has been engaged in narrating his story.

From the beginning of his narrative, Abdulrahim has positioned himself as a struggler who had encountered very different circumstances pre and post conversion. He has struggled in the United States because he was constrained by racism and the poverty into which he was born. This has developed into a new form of struggle after he converted to Islam and moved to Egypt, where he has been constrained by the

environment which fell short of his religious expectations and the hiring practices which he believes favoured locals. While positioning himself as a struggler, he has also developed different senses of belonging that tells us how he wanted to be seen. First, in his early struggle before converting to Islam, he has positioned himself as the black man in the white world of America. Later, he has positioned himself as the Salafist Muslim man who is constrained by the environment in the Muslim countries. Throughout these positions and themes enacted by Abdulrahim in his narrative, there has been a persistent pervasive masculine identity that was central to how he viewed the world. This turns his narrative into one that is male centric, where mostly only male voices were heard and reported (his father, the white boys, the Muslim brothers his older son, etc). Initially, Abdulrahim constructed his masculinity in a way that might be described as hyper, and then becoming progressively toxic as the narrative develops. The imputation of sexual immorality to Egyptian women he finds 'improperly' dressed is where things start to go into the area of toxicity. This has culminated in the story of speaking ungrammatically to his wife to ensure her English remains 'messed up', which accords with Coates (2003), who argues that masculinity is about dominance, toughness and female subordination. Besides, the interaction between him and me as well as his reading of the interview context corresponds to the discourse of male solidarity (Kiesling, 2005), in which men normatively enact their sense of manhood exclusively between them with possible marginalization of women.

These positions and themes brought about by Abdulrahim constitute his sense of categories (black, Muslim and male) that produced his personhood through his conversion story. Within this personhood, there are a constant male struggler identity and changeable sense of belonging (African-American to Muslim and Muslim

brothers). The constancy and change enacted throughout his narratives contribute to how he has developed his sense of the 'individual identities and group belongings' (Bamberg, 2011: 9). It is through these diachronic reference to place and characters where positions and themes are contextualised to bring about these preferred identities. Of course, these are achieved by allowing the narrator's voice to produce his narratives, which is contextualised by the research process (triggering, probing, orienting and analysing). This turns these long narratives into a privileged space, as Baynham (2011; 2014) argues, where preferred identities are constructed by Abdulrahim. In this construct, religion, race and gender intersect and intertwine as he performatively constructs his narrative. These features will be discussed in more detail in the discussion chapter. So far, I have analysed Abdulrahim's story. In the next chapter, I examine the narrative of another African-American convert, Jalal.

Chapter 6: Jalal

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I set out Abdulrahim's story, and in this chapter, I present Jalal's story, the second African-American covered in my study. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, in the analysis of Jalal's story, I focus on the moments where his experiences of race, gender and religion are made salient. Before presenting the data arising from his story, I set out a biographical overview of his story. Then I explicate his narrative by applying the analytic model to five extracts that resonate with my specific research aims. The chapter includes two extracts from his story before he became a Muslim and two extracts from the time after he converted. Finally, I consider an extract focusing on the time after he migrated to Egypt.

6.2 A biographical overview of Jalal's story

Jalal is an African-American who was born in a post-industrial city in the United States. His father passed away when he was six years old, meaning his mother had to take care of him and his siblings. It seems that his family was financially well off, as he used to attend a private Catholic school and did not report any financial difficulties despite his mother being a widow and having to take care of seven children; three were her own children and the other four were from her husband's first wife. Jalal described the family's participation in the Catholic religion as moderate, and that his mother was a committed Catholic who could speak and read Latin. Later in his teenage years, he started attending a Baptist church.

As he advanced into his teenage years, he became less involved in religion. Jalal presented himself with a disciplined persona during his childhood and adolescence whereby being good was central to religious commitment. Later on, when he moved to college to study Psychology, at the time, he used to drink alcohol. He was involved with a black male fraternity that endorsed practices where drinking, physical violence and sexual activity were central, although he said he did not participate in the sexual part. Unlike his promiscuous peers, he reported that he was looking for a virgin to marry and that he managed to find what he claimed was the only woman of African-American heritage who was a virgin on the campus. He started dating her without having any sexual contact despite claiming to be not being very involved with religion at this stage in his life.

Jalal first came to know about Islam when he read the biography of Malcolm X when he was in high school, but he said that it was not something that attracted his attention. When he was at college, his best friend, who was born to a Muslim parent, reverted to Islam and became observant. This affected Jalal, and so he started to learn more about Islam. After he read the Quran, he decided to convert. He made contact with some Muslims from the college campus, and they introduced him to a local mosque where he took his *Shahada*. Then he gradually started practising his religion and enrolled in a college course to learn Arabic. He did not share his conversion to Islam with his family until he felt he was ready to do so a few months after his conversion. His mother did not welcome the news, and he did not manage to convince his girlfriend to convert with him. Consequently, they broke up. He also abandoned the fraternity, as he felt its practices no longer suited him as a Muslim. He started to meet more Arabs and learn more about Islam and was active in doing

Da'wat on the campus. After he graduated, he and his friend who had reverted to Islam went back to their hometown to work in social care. He got married to an African-American Muslim who was the child of a converted parent. Jalal felt that he had to help his hometown to recover after the things that had happened when General Motors relocated to another city. He worked for a few years there and kept learning about Islam and studying Arabic. He also managed to convince his younger brother to become a Muslim, which was something that his mother was furious about.

Eventually he decided to do *Hijrat* and moved to Egypt where he worked as an English language teacher for several institutions, and in the last one, the school owner, an Egyptian woman, propositioned him sexually, which resulted in his resignation. He managed to find a post in Saudi Arabia and by the time I interviewed him he had been working for about ten years in the country. Again, Jalal was facing the same situation as Abdulrahim with regard to challenges in renewing his contract as the university cannot renew contracts for non-local staff after they have completed ten years of working in the country. By the time I interviewed Jalal, he had four children who speak Arabic and study at public schools. In the next section, the first exchanges between Jalal and me are analysed (see Chapter 4, Section 4.5.2 for an idea of how Jalal embodied his religious identity at the time of the interview).

6.3 General Motors

The following extract is the first exchange in Jalal's narratives which I would like to start my analysis with. Jalal starts his narrative by telling the story of his hometown. This is a town where the American car manufacturer giant General Motors (GM) was

based, and he discusses how things had dramatically changed after GM left his hometown. This incident appears to be crucial to how Jalal constructs his story. I find that he constructs an identity about himself that pervades through his entire narrative.

Table 10 Extract 6.1 (I: Ibrahim; J: Jalal)

1	I	Can you tell me about the place where you were born?
2	J	I was born in ********* it is aaaa I would consider it a medium-sized city, but I
3		think by whatever standards they use for measuring demographics or whatever
4		that it was considered a large city (.) population maybe at that time 140
5		thousand people or something like that (.) it was the GM town and what that
6		means is that basically General Motors was what aaa where most people
7		worked at (.) there were many factories there (.) in fact General Motors was
8		founded in my city, however, eventually they moved their headquarters to
9		Detroit, Michigan emm so the… I'd say that because GM was there, we have a
10		very strong tax base which means that we had excellent schools, community
11		programmes, libraries aaa it was really a good place to have grown up (.) up
12		until GM left, aaaaa and they left around let's say the mid-eighties aaa and
13		when they left, there was nothing there to take the place of General Motors (.) a
14		lot of people lost their jobs, their homes, their transportation, families began to
15		break up, drug use became very widespread to fill the void I guess of aaa …
16		that GM <u>left</u>. Aaa so that happened it happened suddenly, but the effect was
17		over time (.) so I'd say that my generation was probably the last generation to
18		have benefitted from all of the good things that having had GM there provided.

In the following, while applying step one of the analytic model, I focus mainly on how Jalal constructs the shift in his hometown and how this impacted people's life. Jalal launches his story about the place where he was born by factually illustrating some of the things about his hometown (lines 2 to 4). Then he rhetorically shifts his story from present to past, which could illustrate a shift in his narrative from a generic narrative to a personal narrative (Baynham, 2011); in a Labovian sense, the utterance 'It was the GM town' (line 5) is the orientation to the story, a story about GM, which had relocated away from the town. After he introduces this event, he starts to construct a series of diachronic events in his hometown to complicate or illustrate what followed the main event. GM is constructed in Jalal's narrative as

authoritative and powerful 'I'd say that because GM was there' (line 9), and because of its existence the life of residents was good, which is illustrated in his references to school, the community programmes and libraries (lines 10 and 11). His hometown was good 'up until GM left' (lines 11 and 12). Jalal emphasizes the power of this industrial body in his utterance 'there was nothing there to take the place of General Motors' (line 13). This indicates the nature of the powerful status of GM and how many people were left behind after GM left. Jalal projects the people as lacking in agency and powerless versus the powerful and agentive GM. As a result of GM's departure, the place changed: 'a lot of people lost their jobs, their homes, their transportation' (line 14). Jalal then elaborates more on how the place had changed by reporting further consequences of the main events: family break-ups and drug dealing. This reminds us of Abdulrahim's projects in Chapter 5, Section 5.3. In this construct, he dramatizes this change by constructing how it happened using the intensifier 'suddenly' (line 16). GM suddenly left, 'but the effect was over time' (lines 16 and 17). The cause and effect in his utterance again shows how he positions his characters in terms of power and how much agency he attributes to these characters.

At the end of his story about GM, he again uses the epistemic modal verb 'would' (line 17) to develop a stance where he constructs his generation as the last generation to benefit from 'all of the good things that having had GM there provided' (line 18). If we examine this utterance and how Jalal constructs it by putting GM as the subject in the argument structure, who had provided all the good, this again illustrates where GM's agency stems from in his narrative. This reminds us of Duranti (1994), who argues about the role of transitivity in agency projection. This latter stance is also a good example of what Labov (1972) refers to as a coda; Jalal

positions himself and his generation as lucky to have benefitted from the good things brought about by GM, before they relocated.

I now move on from the story Jalal recounted to step two of the analytic model in which I try to understand why he tells this particular story at this very early stage of his narrative. This requires considering the context of the production of this story. This narrative about GM appears to feed into how he wants to construct the story of his conversion as a whole and what identities he agentively bring about. Although it is challenging to unpack at this stage of the analysis, it is essential to be aware of why he orients his story about his hometown to that specific event concerning GM. I would suggest that Jalal produces this story about GM to emphasize that he came from a place that was good and helped him to be the good person that he was. However, the case would not be the same for the next generation. The possibility of being a good person became harder after negative things replaced positive things when GM relocated away from the town. Unlike Abdulrahim, Jalal positions himself at the moment of interaction as fortunate. Jalal then moves on to construct himself as mainly different from other black kids, which is the focus of the next section.

6.4 White boy

After Jalal had finished the story about his hometown, and how it was affected by GM's relocation, I turned to ask him about his schooling. He constructed the following story about how he started his education at a private Catholic school and how he put pressure on his mother to be moved to a public one after being bullied by his friend, who called him 'the white boy'. This story illustrates how race and social class indexed in how he enacted his stance.

Table 11 Extract 6.2 (J: Jalal; I: Ibrahim)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	J	I started often at Catholic schools. I was born and raised as a Catholic and my father died actually when I was young when I was child. We eventually moved to a different neighbourhood after his death and none of the children of my neighbourhood went to private schools or Catholic schools or anything like that and actually they used to make a lot of fun about me. They called me the white boy, these sort of things are very sensitive (.) offensive. And because of the school that I went to it had an effect on I guess you know my character, the way that I carried myself, even my speech. It was somewhat different than the other kids in the neighbourhood(.) so I began pressuring my mother to allow me to go to public schools. Eventually she gave in while I was in elementary school and I began going to public schools. As I said those schools they were still actually very good during that time. Lot of after school programmes even within the school there was a lot of support(.) you would have special education for those that needed it right there in the school(.) you have REMEDIO programmes for those that needed that again right there in the school.
16	I	You are referring to the Catholic school.
17 18 19	J	No actually now I'm referring to the public school. With the Catholic school of course it had everything because the financial support that they had just from paying the tuition fees because you have to pay for that school.
20 21	I	So back to the Catholic school you said that your mother decided to bring you up as Catholic didn't you?
22	J	When I first enrolled at school, first grade second grade I was in Catholic school.
23	I	How do you describe the school itself in terms of ethnicity?
24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32	J	It was international I say. We had Americans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Africans, even within the Americans you had whites, blacks, it was very very mixed culturally, however as I recall all of the teachers were white females(.) this is in contrast when I went to the public schools you know there was a mixture there males, females, black, white this sort of thing, but at the Catholic school no(.) the only thing at the Catholic school they had the nuns and they were like as I recall anyway the disciplinarians(.) I remember the librarian was a nun particularly she beat me one time (.) actually I had received many beatings while at the Catholic school by the nuns. They don't play around so I remember that as well.

Following the analysis method, I now apply the first step of the analytic model. It can be seen in this extract that Jalal tells a story about his early education, in which he refers to places and characters to construct a mostly personal narrative with some segments where he shifts to a generic one. He mainly positions himself as different from the other black children. Jalal starts this narrative by reporting that, because of his father's death, his family moved to a new neighbourhood where he enrolled in a private Catholic school. Whereas none of the children in his neighbourhood 'went to private schools or Catholic schools or anything like that' (line 4). Jalal begins

constructing two positions in his account: first, a position for himself as a child who was educated at a private school; and second, a position for children from the neighbourhood who did not go to private or Catholic schools. In these two positions, he presents himself as someone who was different and was positioned as such by his peers from the neighbourhood. These children used to make a lot of fun of him and called him 'the white boy' (line 5) on account of his background. He then takes what Du Bois (2007) calls an evaluative stance in his utterance 'these sort of things are very sensitive (.) offensive' (line 6). He uses the evaluative elements 'sensitive' and 'offensive', intensified with 'very', which demonstrates how he wants to position himself as different from these children; a difference that he attributes to the private school (line 7). He then explains more about being different in his utterances after revealing this stance: 'the way that I carried myself, even my speech. It was somewhat different than the other kids in the neighbourhood' (lines 7 to 9). This is to say that he was different in how he spoke and acted -or bodily hexis in which Bourdieu (1984) argues that the body turns into a space of history assimilation. His embodiment was interpreted by children in the neighbourhood as a white boy way of doing things. Jalal's self-positioning shows how he wanted to be perceived as belonging to a certain social group: non-white and possibly black. However, he had been ascribed, by his sort of people, as belonging to a different social group; a group where people talked and were educated in a certain way that was perceived by the children from his neighbourhood to be white. This suggests that he wants to fit in as authentically black; pressurising his mother reflects this desire to fit in with the other neighbourhood kids (line 9).

At the time, the public schools in his town were still good schools because this was before GM's relocation. Therefore, he moved to a public school at the elementary level of education. Jalal elaborates on how public schools were good at the time he was studying, constructing the context of before the GM relocation; a circumstance he recounts that first by using the circumstantial modal verb 'would': 'You would have special education for those that needed…' (line 13) and then listing some of the good things that were available. I then ask a question that led him to shift his narrative to the private school where he studied. In his description of the school in terms of ethnicity, he reports that the teachers at the Catholic school were all 'white females' (line 26). In contrast, the teachers were diverse 'males, females, black, white' (line 28) at the public school. In these utterances, Jalal constructs binary relationships between male and female, black and white, which could explain why he had been affected by how he was acting. These binaries start to emerge in Jalal's narrative and seem to be pervasive over his conversion story in the following sections in this chapter.

Jalal continues with more details about his upbringing, reporting how the nuns, the religious women from the Catholic communities, used to maintain discipline in his school. He constructs a personal narrative as he reports that he had received several punishments: 'actually I had received many beatings while at the Catholic school by the nuns' (lines 31 and 32). He then shifts his narrative to a generic narrative using the present tense 'They don't play around' (line 32), which seems to emphasize how he wants to position the nuns as 'disciplinarians' (line 30). Then he ends this narrative with what Labov (1972) called a coda: 'I remember that as well' (line 32), in which he uses the mental state verb 'remember' as if he is asserting the

fact that these nuns do not play around, and that experience of being taught at the private school still has its effect own him.

Having completed the first step of the extract, I move on to the next step of the analytic model, where I address the question of what preferred identities Jalal wants to construct by telling this story. Jalal tells this story and constructs himself as different from other children from his neighbourhood to enact a certain persona. He wants to be seen as an African-American who was educated and talked differently from other African-American children. This difference is attributed to the school where he was educated by 'white females' (line 26). This coincides with positioning himself as fortunate to have been brought up at the time GM was still in his hometown. By recounting this story, Jalal enacts at the moment of interaction two positions: the first is constant with the position he has enacted in the GM story as someone who was fortunate; the second is the position of himself as different from other African-Americans from his neighbourhood. In the next extract, I look at how his sense of being African-American emerged more firmly in his narrative when he reveals that he was a Muslim to his mother. In this extract the emphasis also shifts more firmly towards his religious piety.

6.5 You are already black

As mentioned at the end of the previous section, the following narrative captures a moment that shows the intersection of Jalal's religious and sense of being African-American during his time at college. Before going into the extract details, I would like to briefly shed light on what he was narrating before he brought in this story about

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telling his family that he was now a Muslim. Jalal enrolled on a Psychology degree at what was known as a black university in the state. While he was at college, he came to know about Islam after his best friend reverted to Islam. He then started contacting Muslims from the campus and learning more about Islam. Before he started the story shown in the following extract, he was telling me about the doubts he had about Christianity, and I asked him if he had ever talked to his mother about these doubts. Then he recounted the following story.

Table 12 Extract 6.3 (J: Jalal; I: Ibrahim)

1	I	Had you had any conversation with your mother about all these doubts?
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	J	Before when I was basically searching, no no I didn't (.) I was in university about an hour and half away from home and you know (.) my mother was always really busy (.) the other thing is that once I did convert my mother became concerned about my younger brother and began attacking him (.) she never really attacked me directly (.) when I converted she was just concerned about my I guess worldly position or whatever the case may be in fact when I told her words to me were **you're already black and now you've gone and become a Muslim** (.) meaning that basically what she says that I have two strikes against me now
11	I	How did you feel when she said so?
12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	J	Her statement it surprised me because she was more concerned about my status in the world as opposed to my status in the hereafter so to speak (.) meaning that I've done something that will make my life in this world more difficult (.) usually you'll probably find that when someone you know changes their lifestyle or something especially in this matter mean he changed religions (.) the concern is either about you know just your beliefs being different than theirs or the concern about you know potentially you know going to the Hell fire because you don't believe what they believe (.) but her concern was neither she wasn't concerned about my beliefs being different than hers she wasn't concerned about me you know not going to paradise or going to the Hell fire (.) she was concerned about status and opportunities in this life (.) so I never forgot about that well I never forgot that because it's always stuck with me coz it was just kind of funny you know strange that she would say that (.) however it didn't affect me because I saw I could see my path yeah.
26	I	How about other family members?
27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34	J	My younger brother years later he did actually convert but no one else eventually did (.) they tried to accommodate me for Christmas. They cooked fish for me, separate from the other food(.) you know I couldn't eat the pork and the meat(.) that was during my first couple of years, but after that I realized that I shouldn't be going celebrating Christmas and this sort of thing with them. Actually it was harder on me to separate because of my family to separate myself from them during those times(.) it wasn't the issue of making *Sherk* but it's a family sort of

35		functioning(.) it's the closeness you lose that part of your life(.) it was very difficult actually.

In analysing this extract, I first apply step one of the analytic model. Jalal refers in this story to characters from his family: his mother, his brother and then an unspecified reference to other family members, 'they' (line 27), in which he constructs two events: his mother's reaction to his conversion and the Christmas parties in his early life as a Muslim. He starts this story in response to my question about his religious doubts. He then orients his story to his mother's reaction to his conversion in his utterance 'once I converted my mother became concerned about my younger brother' (lines 4 and 5). In a Labovian sense, this utterance serves as an orientation to the story of telling his family that he was a Muslim. It is interesting how he brings his brother into the story at this stage (line 5), who was directly attacked by his mother. In this, he positions himself as firm and responsible, as someone who could handle things and knew what he wanted to do, and this is also emphasized by how he constructs his mother as not concerned about him. This indicates the agency he attributes for himself in constructing his story, positioning himself as someone who does what he wants.

He then moves on to elaborate about his mother's concerns using an epistemic mental state verb 'guess' (line 6) and orienting these concerns to worldview factors rather than religious ones (lines 6 and 7). Jalal then rhetorically quotes his mother's words when he told her that he converted to Islam '**you're already black and now you've gone and become a Muslim**' (line 8). Her utterance resonates with what Abdulrahim refers to as the black man in the white world of America (Chapter 5, Section 5.5). It seems here that his mother constructs the difficult circumstance of

being black in America and puts forward the difficulty of the constraints of being black and Muslim. This is as if to say you are already disadvantaged by being black and you will be more disadvantaged now after you have become a Muslim. He then shifts from his mother's voice to his own voice and tries to explain what she meant: 'I have two strikes against me now' (line 9). He uses 'strike' in the predicate, which indicates the intensity of the action with possible harms and underlines his (and his mother's) sense of struggles for being African-Americans.

Moreover, Jalal comments on his mother's concerns as if he was surprised that his mother was more concerned about his status in the world rather than in the hereafter (line 13). This suggests that Jalal wants to construct two positions: one where he positions his mother as someone who cares about everyday life and himself as someone who cares less about this, positioning himself instead as a believer. These positions of the believer versus the person who cares more about everyday life has been developed further when he shifts his narrative from personal to generic, and the shift from anaphoric references to ambiguous ones (Jalal, his brother and his mother to you and someone). This shift shows how he diffuses agency and responsibility of knowledge in the talk. In his explanation, he starts to refer to 'you' (line 15), which seems to refer to those who are in his position (the believers). He seems to be suggesting that for a person who changes their religion, the concerns should not be about the differences between people in lifestyle (line 15). The concerns should rather be to what extent the change in belief could cause that person to go to Hell or Paradise (line 22). This also suggests that he constructs these positions or identities, deriving meaning from two worlds: the first is 'status and opportunities in this life' (line 23) and the second is 'status in the hereafter' (line 13).

Jalal complicates that experience when he says: 'I never forgot that because it's always stuck with me' (line 24). These utterances align with what Labov (1972) terms as evaluative element. He then takes what Du Bois (2007) calls an evaluative stance: 'it was just kind of funny you know strange' (lines 23 and 24). He uses the intensifiers 'funny' and 'strange' in the utterance referring to his experience or to his mother's reaction. Then he ends this story with what Labov (1972) calls a coda, when he reports that he could see his path: 'I could see my path yeah' (line 25). In this utterance, he uses an epistemic modal verb followed by a mental state verb 'see', which again shows the agency he claims in enacting his experience. In this part of the story, the interpretation he puts on his mother's response could be seen as a very perverse interpretation and shows his inability to see things from her perspective. There is something very self-aggrandising about his story – which is one of the single minded religiosity and self-righteousness.

Jalal then moves his narrative to the other event that shows how his new religious identity impacted his relations with his family. He reports that his brother also converted to Islam. This justifies why his mother was directly attacking his brother. He then brings in the Christmas story. His family tried to integrate him in this occasion by offering him food that he can eat: 'They cooked fish for me' (lines 28 and 29). He states that he 'couldn't eat pork', which is an example of the 'boulomaic' modal verb. Later on, he realizes that he should not attend these occasions, and reports another instance using the boulomaic' modal verb again. According to Narrog (2012), boulomaic' modal verbs are constituents of the speaker's agency as they express his/her obligations and the possibility of what they could do.

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He then takes an evaluative stance to this experience of separating from his family during these occasions, which he finds difficult: 'it was harder on me' (line 32). He is not missing the faith itself: 'It wasn't the issue of making *Sherk* but it's a family sort of functioning' (lines 33 and 34). He uses here the word *Sherk*, which means, in the Islamic faith, polytheism or worshipping someone alongside *Allāh*, and Jalal seems to deem Christmas to be a kind of *Sherk*. However, he misses that part of his family life: 'It's the closeness you lose that part of your life' (line 34). At the end, he takes a stance regarding that experience with the intensifier 'very difficult' (line 35), which seems to serve as a coda to the story marking its ending. This is also a story of personal sacrifice and further proof of his understanding of what religious piety means. Piety for Jalal is single minded adherence to his understanding of religious rules.

In this story, Jalal agentively enacts his religious identity by elaborating on how he crafts his path as a new Muslim by embodying what he possibly can and cannot do. He agentively performs these practices to make himself the kind of Muslim he is; the Muslim who is submissive to his faith, seeking the hereafter life to be saved from Hell fire and to be rewarded by going to Paradise. This aligns with Mahmood's (2005) work on agency and submission in Islamic piety in which she argues that central to piety is the idea of submitting to the *Allāh* will. This is the path he crafts for himself through these narratives enacting agentively his submission to the will of *Allāh*.

I move now to the next step in the analytic model and address the question of what were Jalal's preferred identities at the moment of interaction when he has narrated his religious story conversion? Jalal reports these two events in order to bring about a certain identity about himself. The two positions he constructs for himself (the

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believer) and for his mother (a person who cares about status and opportunities) seem to feed into a certain religious identity he wants to be associated with; this identity was expressed particularly in how he embodies his religiosity, which leads him to become separated from his family which also suggests that he is underlining his strength. He agentively styles his practices to enact religious piety; these practices stipulated what he could and should not do in order to submit to his religious rituality. All of these factors feed into how he wants to be seen as a pious Muslim. Jalal's enactment of piety reminds us of Nieuwkerk's (2014) informant's construction of her religious piety who struggles during the commitment to *Allāh's* will; a struggle that involves sacrifice and submission. In the next extract, I examine how Jalal enacts of continuity of his sense of good in his transition from one religion to another.

6.6 I was looking for a virgin

After Jalal had finished telling me the story about revealing to his family that he was a Muslim, I asked the question shown in the first turn in Extract 6.4. Then he starts to recount a story about how he deliberately chose his girlfriend. In this story, I find that Jalal enacts his religious identity in a way that intertwines his sexual and gender identities. At the same time, he enacts a kind of continuity of his religious piety from Christianity to Islam.

Table 13 Extract 6.4 (J: Jalal; I: Ibrahim)

1 2	I	Can you tell me about coming out as a Muslim to your friends and your girlfriend at that time?
3 4	J	When I converted not in a particular order because I don't remember the order of the events but my girlfriend.
5	I	You were dating at that time?
6 7 8 9	J	Yeah. This girl I actually chose her. What I mean by that is we didn't meet the way a normal couple with me I actually (.) this is before Islam I was a Christian I for some reason I got it in my mind that I wanted to marry a woman who basically was a virgin.
10	I	OK I got it.
11 12 13	J	There was one virgin on the campus of like thousands of people /Laughter/ and I sorted her out I sorted out I asked around and I asked and I found out that this girl was a virgin.
14	I	She was African-American
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	J	Yes she was African-American so I you know began communicating with her this sort of thing when we began dating (.) and at some point within the course of our relationship (.) because we never like I never used to touch her or anything because I want I was looking to get married actually but sort of thing I do want to go into a marriage like that (.) anyway I converted to Islam and she was very I would say resistant (.) but she came along eventually she started thinking about it and I remember one vacation she went home she told her mother about it and when she came back she was a totally shattered totally different attitude towards me and toward Islam (.) so we broke up her mother told her a bunch of lies basically (.) like really strange lies and she believed them like *Allāh is a moon God* and this sort of thing coz they they had this famous preacher back then I think he's still around he wrote this book about how *Allāh is a moon God* and it's a popular book for anti-Islamic *Da'wat* (.) her mother believed that and convinced her of it and a bunch of other lies and we just we just we broke up
29	I	OK
30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47	J	So that that was done and then with my friends as I was a part of a fraternity I began breaking away from them they weren't really happy with it you know they didn't understand why I couldn't be Muslim and be a part of this fraternity (.) but the two just don't correlate that they don't go together at all so I basically abandoned them (.) like a lot of other things affairs that I began leaving off (.) because my conversion some people became afraid of me in fact I think I had a reputation at university already because of my involvement with what we call African-American students' affairs (.) when I converted to Islam a lot of people became interested in Islam so that was a problem I remember like my first maybe two months or so (.) often times I would go to class and the school detective just be standing by the door you know I've been I've seen him more often than anyone should see the detective (.) he was a police officer and he let me know you know he's singled to me let me know that you know that he was watching me (.) like I said after a couple of months I think it became clear to them that you know **okay we know this guy he's just a vocal guy he's accepted this strange religion but other than that you know nothing's really going on** and I remember like there was a time where I'd stop seeing it detected at all.

In this extract, Jalal tells a story about his girlfriend, how he met her and what

consequences his conversion had on their relationship. He also reports how his

conversion led him to dissociate himself from the fraternity, and how it affected his image and his relations at the university campus. He refers to characters and places and arranged them in time in order to construct his preferred identities. Before looking at these preferred identities, I begin by applying the first step of the analytic model. Jalal starts this story by recounting how he managed to date his girlfriend. As presented, he links his agency with a type of continuity with who he was before he became a Muslim (line 7). According to Duranti (1994), this shows how much agency is attributed to the subject 'I' in the argument structure of the utterance. He chose her, not like with other couples he points out, denying normality in how they met (line 7), because she was a virgin (line 9). This shows how he constructed gender roles and sexuality in this story. He, the heterosexual male, chose a girl partner who was a virgin. The male is the actor, and the girl appears in these utterances to be an object that is less active.

Jalal was not Muslim: 'this is before Islam I was a Christian' (line 7). However, he constructs himself as already abiding with how sexuality is regulated within Islamic discourse; he wanted to 'marry a woman' (line 8) and then he brings in the issue of virginity, which adheres to Islamic discourse where sexual intercourse between couples is prohibited outside marriage. He appears to be saying that although he was not a Muslim, he had been acting in accordance with how sexuality is regulated in Islam (and Catholicism, for that matter). This aligns with the work of Nieuwkerk (2014) and Ozyurek (2014) who reports that converts tried to bridge a kind of continuity: although they were not originally Muslim, they were acting like Muslims, and this is how they ended up converting. Interestingly, though Jalal constructs in this story his sexual identity 'the man looking for the virgin', his references to women

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were less sexual when he uses girl or women rather than female. This is different from Abdulrahim's case in chapter 5 who uses more sexual references when referring to women.

I moved on to asking about his girlfriend's background and he elaborates about how he met her. After he worked out that she was a virgin, he started to communicate with her until they started dating. He then explains how they used to meet without sexual contact; he did not use to touch her (line 17). This suggests that in terms of gendered sexual relations touching is the (at least initially) prerogative of the man. Again, he was the agentive actor, and she was constructed as lacking of agency; he was reiterating what Coates (2003) describes as normative gender roles where heterosexuality is stabilized, and male are more agentive. Jalal goes on to justify his attitude of not having any sexual contact with his girlfriend, ascribing this to the fact that he would not allow it outside marriage. After he had converted to Islam, he tried to take her with him, but she was resistant (line 19). Although her resistance is an indication of her own agency, using the adjective 'resistant' again shows how he wants to position her as an object who he wanted to convince, and she was constructed as less agentive. She started to think about following him and converting to Islam (line 20). However, she listened to her mother who told her what he describes as 'a bunch of lies' (line 23). So, they broke up. Again, this shows how Jalal's religious identity crafts his life story and how he agentively narrates his actions in order to enact his submission to religious norms. This is also a mirror of his own story. He resists his own mother – she does not.

Jalal then shifts his narrative to the other part of my question when he starts to discuss how his religious conversion impacted his friendships. He starts by narrating

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how he broke up with the fraternity. His friends there did not understand why he could not be a Muslim and be part of the fraternity. He then explicates that the two are things that cannot go together. Therefore, he abandoned the fraternity. In this construct, Jalal uses the first person pronoun 'I': 'I began breaking away' (lines 30 and 31), 'I couldn't be a Muslim and part of the fraternity' (line 32), and 'I abandoned them' (line 33). In these events, he is narrating a personal experience; consequently, it is likely that he would use the first person singular pronoun 'I'. However, De Fina (1995, 2003) reports that narrators vary in how they construct their voices or take their positions in personal narratives. She argues that the use of the first person pronoun 'I' indicates that narrators attribute agency to themselves, as this shows how they centre their narrative world on their subjective ability to agentively act in their story. I feel that this resembles Jalal's case in which his agency stems from his use of the first personal pronoun 'I'.

Moreover, Jalal's recount of how he had to abandon other things due to his new conversion circumstance seems to be constructed as a constraint to his life on campus. This can be seen in his utterance 'people became afraid of me' (line 35). He further elaborates on the situation as he brought in his involvement with African-American students' affairs (line 37) and how his conversion attracted more people to Islam (line 38). This shows how he constructed his African-American identity along with his religious identity as constraints to his being a student within the American context.

Attracting African-Americans to Islam was a problem; consequently, he was monitored by the school detective (line 40). It is worth mentioning here that positioning himself as someone who was suspected by the school detective

resonates with his mother's concerns in Extract 6.3 when she deemed his conversion as a constraint to his opportunities and status. After being monitored, they came to realize that he was still the same person as before he became a Muslim. He constructs this by rhetorically reporting collective speech for the school and the detective using the first person plural pronoun 'we' (line 44). Through reporting their speech, he positions himself as the same good person he was previously: '**he's accepted this strange religion but other than that you know nothing's really going on'** (lines 44 and 45). Therefore, they stopped watching him. This again shows how Jalal constructed his identity with a level of continuity with that before his religious conversion.

Having engaged with the linguistic analysis and the 'there and then' of Extract 6.4, I now move to the next step of the analytic model and try to explore what identities Jalal wants to enact at the moment of interaction. Before starting to explore this, it is vital to revisit the positions he has enacted for himself and situate them within the interview context. Jalal constructs three positions for himself which relate to how he wants to be seen by me. First, he enacts himself as someone who was acting like a Muslim even though he was Christian. This serves to construct a kind of continuity with the person he was before and after conversion to Islam. Then he positions himself as an African-American. Finally, he positions himself as a religious person who has to submit to his faith and relatively adhere to certain principles in how he embodies his religious identity. He is the heterosexual male who had been regulating his sexuality in a similar way to Muslims even though he was not a Muslim at this stage. All these positions seem to help Jalal to appear at the moment of interaction as the pious Muslim who, unlike other African-Americans he knows, was sexually

disciplined, in accordance with Islamic norms. This disciplined pious identity is constructed by Jalal as a continuous identity that bridges his religious conversion. Interestingly, he appears to have an expectation, which is that I understand his 'asking around' construct, which shows how I was also positioned in alignment with him in his exploitation of sexuality. This indicates that Jalal wants to be seen as a Muslim even before he converted to Islam which is, according to Nieuwkerk (2014), a common narrative among convert Muslims. Another aspect of his story in Extract 6.4 is that it also accords with Kiesling's (2005), where he argues that men's talks are enactments of homosociality that correspond to the discourse of male solidarity. As it can be seen, the interlocutors here are primarily two men interacting in a story about women with some level of subordination.

In the next extract, I examine Jalal's story about his job as a language teacher in Egypt. This story shows how Jalal embodied his religious piety in order to construct his professional identity.

6.7 The school owner

In Extract 6.5, Jalal constructs a story about how he was embodying his religious identity in a way that shaped his professional identity as a language teacher. He also continues to demonstrate how his sexual behaviour was determined by his religious piety. In the following, I examine a story where the school owner was central to how he constructs his identity. Beforehand, I want to briefly report what he was telling me before recounting the story shown in Extract 6.5. After Jalal had finished college, he had gone back to his hometown where he worked as a social care worker. He got married to a Muslim-born woman and then came to the idea of doing *Hijrat*. He

decided to go to Egypt where he started working as an English language teacher.

While he was in Egypt, he went for *Hajj* to Mecca and was telling me before he

started the story in Extract 6.5.

Table 14 Extract 6.5 (J: Jalal; I: Ibrahim)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	J	things were going relatively well for me in Egypt (.) there was this wealthy woman out there about to start an American school near the pyramids (.) along with some other people (.) eventually she got rid of everyone except for me (.) however even this school outgrew me as well I mean they you know they were paying me a lot of money that was a problem the other thing was because of my religious perspective it prevented them from doing certain things like you know they wanted to celebrate Christmas these were Muslims of course they wanted to celebrate Halloween Thanksgiving everything right.
9	I	Okay.
10 11 12 13 14	J	and I they never pushed me about it but it was just clear that you know I wasn't going to go for it (.) she owned the school she could do whatever she wanted but I think it was just out of respect that she just you know did it but it just came to a head really and [Very long pause] I don't know [Long pause] this aaaa I ended up leaving /laughter/ let's put it that way.
15	I	Okay.
16 17	J	it is kind of (.) the way that they got me out was kind of (.) do you wouldn't expect someone to do it but [long pause]
18	I	Have you been asked to leave?
19 20 21 22 23	J	no they got rid of everyone they I refused to run the school they actually made me(.) because I was the longest-standing member of the original team I had like a special position with no title (.) and they made me fire several principals which was kind of awkward because technically the principal is my boss but then they would make me fire fire a couple of them like several of them.
24	I	so you were powerful /laughter/
25 26	J	yeah and then like so I refused to run the school they they like it was a family they treated me really well but then the the owner called me into her bedroom.
27	I	Okay.
28 29	J	like literally into the bedroom and I was it was Ramadan and we were fasting anyway.
30	I	and she was Muslim?
31 32 33 34	J	and she was Muslim [long pause] and she was /laughter/ she was anyway so I resigned that that was the end of that I resigned I didn't have a job and *Allāh* just opened up opportunity for me to come to Saudi and I just left that was it yeah so I was unemployed for like one month and then I came to Saudi.

I start the analysis for this extract by applying the first step of the analytic model. This

is done through unpacking how he constructs his story world. Jalal starts his account

by stating how good his job was in Egypt. Then he discusses further his job situation

by bringing in his main character, the 'wealthy woman' (line 1), who along with others

started an American school near the pyramids (line 2). This wealthy woman is positioned as authoritative, as she got rid of everyone except for him. In this construct, he seems to present himself as inagentive, or he losses agency and maintains a righteous identity. He explains how he was influencing the school as his religious perspective 'prevented them' (the school) (line 6) from celebrating Christmas, Halloween and Thanksgiving. He refers to the school staff and owner as Muslim, but they still wanted to celebrate these events (lines 6 and 7). Again, he seems to maintain his position as a pious Muslim, who would not allow that. He positions himself as authoritative over their decision 'I was not going to do for it' (lines 10 and 11).

Jalal then refers to the school owner whom he constructs as agentive and authoritative by using the boulomaic' modal verb 'could'; 'she could do whatever she wanted' (line 11). However, he appropriates her reaction to him, as she kept him on and would listen to his views. Jalal hesitates to elaborate on how he ended up being fired (line 12). I managed to trigger him to elaborate on the incident. After a long pause, he goes on to dramatize his exit from school using the modal verb 'wouldn't' and the mental state verb 'expect' (line 16) to complicate the action. I asked for clarification and then he starts to elaborate more about his status at that school. He refers to what Labov (1972) calls an ambiguous reference, 'they' (line 19), who got rid of everyone except him. He refused to run the school and then 'they' gave him a special position (lines 20 and 21). This is because he was the longest-standing member of the original team. Therefore, he had the power to fire his bosses – the school principals. Interestingly, if we look at his utterance 'they made me fire several principals which was kind of awkward' (lines 20 and 21), we can see how he positions himself as inagentive in the action of firing. That is to say, he was made to

do so, constructing himself as the object in the argument structure, and the authoritative 'they', the ambiguous reference, is positioned as the subject. According to Duranti (1994), this shows how much agency is ascribed to the characters (the agentive subject versus the inagentive object) which accords to what I mentioned earlier about his loss of agency. He then took an evaluative stance to that experience using the intensifier 'awkward' (line 22).

Jalal then goes on to elaborate about how he stopped working for the school. He constructs the story of his exit by stating how his relations with the school owner were friendly, 'it was a family' (line 24), and how things were going well (line 25). After that, he introduces the incident of the owner asking him into her bedroom. It was the sexual harassment that he did not want to reveal at the beginning of the story that lies behind his exit from the school. Again, Jalal constructs the incident of sexual harassment from the perspective of his religious piety; it was Ramadan and 'we were fasting'. I assume that 'we' here refers to both him and the Muslim school owner; therefore, he resigned. Jalal brings in at the end the divine reference '*Allāh*' who helped the believer (him) to overcome this situation and 'opened up' (line 30) the opportunity for him to come to Saudi Arabia, the place where he was willing to go. He presents himself and his trajectory in terms of a religious drama. So much of what he relates is at the level of religious trope (the Islamic story of Joseph). The way in which Jalal constructed the school owner is similar to Abdulrahim's story (Chapter 5, Section 5.4) about the Christian school owner. Both women are constructed as authoritative and positioned as unreligious in the pious worlds of Abdulrahim and Jalal.

I move on to the next step of the analytic model where I try to understand what identities Jalal wants to be seen as having in the moment of interaction 'here and

now'. Jalal brings up his story about his post at the American school and how he ended up leaving the school. He positions his characters in the story (mainly himself and the school owner) in such a way as to help him to present two identities at the moment of his interview. First, Jalal continues enacting his pious religious identity where he seems to centre the whole of his narrative on his religiosity. It seems that he wants to present himself as the committed Muslim who would submit to his religious faith regardless of the consequences (e.g., leaving his job). Also, the school owner story was used to help him to present himself as the heterosexual male who seemed to be to some degree) bragging to another heterosexual male (me, the interviewer) about the story of when he was invited to the school owner's bed. These two identities seem to be the ones Jalal wanted to be present himself with when he brought up the story.

6.8 Concluding remarks on Jalal's narratives

To conclude Jalal's narrative after applying the first two steps of the analytic model, I sum up the positions and identities enacted by him and how he managed to do so in order to understand how he has enacted continuity and change over his religious conversion story. Beforehand, as stated in the previous chapter, the identities he incorporates into his story are attentive and relevant to the context of interaction. Again, they are momental, and relevant only to the moment of speaking.

As it can be seen all over the positions Jalal has been enacting, he has been drawing on different linguistic practices in order to construct his preferred identities (reporting speech, shifting in narrative types- from personal to generic, reporting speech, to modality and pronominal choices). Besides, Jalal has always centralized his narrative to his own voice where and when meaning characters and positions are

enacted with high level of agency ascribed to him in the responsibility of knowledge; this has been achieved by the overuse of the personal pronouns which shows how he wants to present himself as the agentive submissive believer to his faith, which seems to be pervasive all over his narrative. This also helps him enact a persona of religious piety in which he has embodied his kind of pious religious identity by being assertive on what he should and should not do as a family member, a heterosexual partner and a language teacher. In other words, central to that submissive identity is his suffering and resistance; he has suffered when he broke with his family, and he resisted the school owner which points to his religiosity and her (inappropriate) sexuality. Jalal's submission to his faith constrained how he has enacted his gender, social, sexual and professional identities in which meaning were negotiated through different discourses in a way that enable the interlocutor, Jalal in this research, to enact the kind of person he prefers to be seen with.

In all these positions and identities enacted by Jalal, there has been a persistent persona that he enacts for himself. A persona characterised by the identity of difference: he was different from his peers in the neighbourhood in how he carried out himself, from the other teenage in how he met his girlfriend, from his mother in how she valued the worldly status over the life hereafter, and from the other (implicitly bad) Muslims in Egypt who would celebrate non-Islamic occasions. Constructing this persona also illustrates how Jalal has enacted constancy over his preferred identities. However, within that constancy, change is also enacted. In other words, Jalal has brought about all these identities and picked up these themes which shows how he has enacted continuity as well as different and has been always Muslim even before he came to be one. After presenting Jalal story, I have

concluded presenting my American informant, and I move to my first British

informant, Steven.

Chapter 7: Steven

7.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I presented the two African-American participants of this study. In this chapter, I set out the story of Steven, the first of the two British participants. I focus on segments of his story that include salient features regarding gender, race and religion, which are my areas research interests. I have selected five extracts for analysis: two are about his life before becoming a Muslim, two concern the time after he converted, and one is about his life after he moved to Saudi Arabia. I begin the chapter by giving a brief biographical overview of Steven's life. This is followed by presenting the analysis of five extracts from his story in which I apply the first two steps of the analytic model. Finally, I conclude the chapter with some remarks on the analysis.

7.2 A biographical overview of Steven's story

Steven is British and is the son of a Caribbean migrant couple in the UK. His parents came to work as healthcare professionals. He was the only child, and this seems to have played a very important role in shaping his narrative. Steven spent his childhood mostly with a child minder, as his parents needed to work long hours during the day. This was not a very pleasant experience for him, as can be seen in section 7.3.

Steven was brought up as a Methodist. His mother used to take him to church every Sunday and they used to attend the Saturday school. Later in his life, they started to

attend the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. It was his mother who decided which church they would attend and was very engaged with the religion while his father was passive and did not attend frequently. Steven attended a religious primary school (the Church of England) for his early education.

As he grew up, he started to have some questions concerning his faith and was engaged researching these and asking people about them. However, his mother started to have some issues with the church, and they stopped attending. After finishing secondary school, he went to a college where he came to know about Islam and started reading and learning about it. His first step was to learn about the Nation of Islam as they are from an African background and Steven was interested in learning about them. He then started to go to mosques and bookshops in east London, and after about two years he converted to Islam. This was not welcomed by his mother, who was very resistant to accept him being a Muslim; there was some friction because of this, to the extent that his mother threatened to stop financing his studies. He took a year off from college and started to work as a van driver. After that, he managed to get his parents to support his studies and he graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering.

Steven didn't have a lot of friends in his childhood, which seems to have resulted from the time he had to spend with what he describes as his nanny. He described himself as a good kid who did not have girlfriends like the other children in his school. After he converted to Islam, he met a young woman when he was doing some *Da'wat.* She was from the same area where he lived. He told her that he knew her brother and managed to convince her to read about Islam. Eventually, she converted, and they started to talk more. In his last year at university, where he studied Engineering, he proposed to her, and they had married by the time they

graduated. His wife's experience of converting to Islam was much easier than his was, as her parents welcomed the change. By the time I interviewed Steven, they had been married for 12 years and have two daughters and one son.

Steven started his career as a postgraduate researcher at a British university near to where he used to live. He was working for a research centre while doing a PhD. He was motivated to do this following a visit to his mother-in-law, who was working in the eastern Saudi province where the oil industry is based. He made this visit after they did *Ummrah to Mecca.* This made him to start thinking about developing his skills in order to move to Saudi Arabia and work in the oil industry. However, he spent a few years applying for jobs and was not able to secure a post. Later, he met a friend who told him about language teaching. Steven enrolled on a CELTA course and before he completed it was offered a job at a language centre at a Saudi university. He worked for that university for five years while attending a university master's programme in education. After he finished his five-year contract, he was offered a position at the British Council in the capital, which is the position he was holding when I interviewed him. Steven reported that because of the new migration policy in Saudi Arabia, he is considering moving to another country within the Middle East.

7.3 The Nanny

This section presents the opening story in his narrative. Before Steven shared the story in Extract 7.1, and prior to starting the recording, we had been overwhelmed with talk about some memories during the time we were working together. As the recording started, Steven began to take the floor after I asked him about his family.

Following my question, he shared the following story about his nanny, with whom his parents used to drop him off with before they went to work.

Table 15 Extract 7.1 (I: Ibrahim; S: Steven)

1 2 3 4	**S**	Well, yah(.) so my parents were in London at that stage and I pretty much had an <u>okay</u> childhood(.) My parents were around, and things weren't easy but we managed we got through much adversity(.) so I had utilized, my parents utilized a childminder, sometimes referred to as a <u>nanny</u>.
5	**I**	Yah.
6 7	**S**	and so they were working, both parents, my mother and my father, were working and I would be with the <u>nanny</u> in the day(.) so yah.
8	**I**	Okay it seems common in London.
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	**S**	It's a bit different(.) the nanny, I would get dropped off in the morning to the nanny(.) I had to get up really early, five or six in the morning, get ready and get dropped off to the nanny, so that the nanny could look after me until it was time for me to be taken to school, because my parents would have gone to the early shift of what they call a long day(.) Not like a normal shift(.) it was an extra-long shift to make more money to have more opportunities(.) So they would go to work from seven so they had to drop me off maybe six o'clock so that they can go to work at seven(.) so early shift.
18	**I**	Can you tell me what they were doing?
19	**S**	My parents were healthcare professionals so they worked in hospitals.
20	**I**	Would you describe them as a middle class?
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	**S**	Yeah, they had psychology and psychiatric backgrounds so they were working with… they were working like in social work, which is working with clients and patients, working with psychiatric cases, cases where people have issues in the society so that's again care work, society work(.) at a later point in time, my father started a business where he had his own care home where he had patients with different disabilities and different actual elements, so it was things to do with health and professional care.
29	**I**	Which means that their income was fine.
30 31 32 33 34	**S**	Yeah, they did quite well, but in the early days, because like you know, wasn't easy(.) they'd have to work long hours to make an advantage. It wasn't handed to them(.) they had to work to have that quality of life. So that's why they dropped me long days, seven in the morning till nine at night.
35	**I**	Oh, that's too long.
36 37 38 39	**S**	This is what I'm saying(.) I didn't really have that much time with my parents in the early days maybe as if I would like… others have so it was a bit challenging(.) and I'm the only one(.) my mom had some difficulties conceiving after.
40	**I**	Okay, so you were the only child.
41 42 43	**S**	Right. It's a double whammy as we say(.) it's a balance and on top of that I'm with nanny and I'm not with my friends because I'm not really able to play out, the social networking side of things is different(.) it's a challenge.
44	**I**	It is indeed.

45	S	And you grew up, kind of missing some aspects that other people have
46		that they, that they take as normal.

Following the analytic model, I start the analysis by applying the first step of the analytic model, in which I look at how Steven constructed his story world. Steven launches his narrative by recounting his childhood, where he seems to represent himself as different. He starts by stating that his parents were both around and he had an 'okay' childhood (line 2). Then he adopts an evaluative stance using the intensifier 'not easy'; this differs from the previous two participants who usually adopted a stance after reporting events. He elaborates more on the 'not easy' things in his narrative: 'we managed. We got through much adversity' (line 3). He uses the first-person plural pronoun 'we', which refers to him and his parents, and is followed by the verb 'managed', which demonstrates how he wants to represent himself and his parents as people who struggled. Steven illustrates where their struggle came from when he reported that his parents used a childminder, or a nanny (line 4), because they were both working.

The childminder or the nanny seems to be central to his story of adversity. Interestingly, he uses the word 'nanny' as it is more relevant to the Saudi context in which domestic workers are referred to as nanny in the region where he lives. In the analysis, I use his term nanny as it is used more by Steven' account. Following my comment on his childhood story, he resists my evaluation of his story being normal, and tried to maintain a degree of difference by providing more information on his nanny situation. He would be dropped off at the nanny in the very early morning and the nanny 'could look after me until it was time for me to be taken to school' (lines 11 and 12) because his parents 'would have gone to the early shift' (line 13). In these

utterances, he uses the circumstantial modal verbs 'could' and 'would' in constructing the circumstance involving the nanny.

He then amplifies his difference by recounting his parents' jobs; they were working as healthcare professionals (line 19). At this point, I become involved in the story by reflecting on their income, and he returns to the position he wanted to enact for his parents as being different. This is enacted by reporting that achieving their financial status 'wasn't easy' (line 31). There was a socioeconomic constraint; therefore, 'they'd have to work long hours to make an advantage'. He uses the modal verb 'would' that indicates habitual past action to recount how his parents were constrained by having to work long hours to achieve the socioeconomic status of being 'middle class', as I positioned them (line 20). In Steven's words, 'their income was fine' (line 29). However, 'it wasn't handed to them. They had to work to have that quality of life' (line 32). These utterances show how Steven tries to represent his story as one of difference in which his parents' struggle in managing their careers resonates with his own struggle as child. Moreover, Steven portrays his parents as agentive in their struggle with the constraint posed by their jobs. At some moments, he refers to them using the third-person pronoun and placed them as a subject in the argument structure. According to De Fina (1995, 2003) and Duranti (1994), these practices show how much agency is ascribed to the reported subject in the story. In contrast, Jalal's (after GM reallocation) characters in his story were represented as inagentive in their struggle with job constraints.

Steven elaborates further on him being different by reporting that he had not spent enough time with his parents because of their jobs and by bringing in a new event: that he was 'the only one' (line 38); his mother 'had some difficulties conceiving' (lines 38 and 39). He again emphasizes his situation being different by complicating

the actions using the metaphor 'double whammy' (line 41) to take a stance regarding his two experiences. In other words, he brings in the two events of being looked after by a nanny and being an only child in order to underline his position as being different (line 43). This is a difference which is a constituent part of his struggle with the circumstance of being raised in this way. He missed the social aspect (lines 43 and 45) of childhood that most people have. Interestingly, he refers to himself with the second person pronoun 'you' (line 45) which seems to indicate that he is constructing a generic narrative to those like him to illustrate the difficult of being with the nanny.

I move on to the next step in the analytic model and attempt to understand which identities Steven prefers to be seen with at the moment of interaction. Steven constructs his parents' employment circumstance and brings in the nanny and only child stories in order to position himself and his parents as strugglers, who had been constrained by much adversity. They had to encounter different circumstances (his parents having to work long hours and him being an only child with a nanny) and they got through these circumstances. Steven's denial towards how I interpreted his story as generic to working parents (line 9) shows, I would suggest, his preference to being perceived as a struggler. At the same time, in his account, I was positioned as a second language speaker, which can be seen in his use of 'sometimes referred to' (line 4) and 'as we say' (line 41). The positions enacted by Steven in his narrative orientation are also pervasive in the next two sections, where he tells a story about his religious questions and how he had wanted to get married from a very early age.

7.4 I am just trying to get a concrete answer

In the following extract, Steven recounts a story about how he had developed questions about Christianity that he did not find the answers to. I selected this segment of Steven's narrative because I find that he constructed a persona that fed into how he wants to present himself as a person seeking concrete knowledge (Steven's words) at a very early age. This shows how he projects continuity in who he was and how this correlates with his construction of himself as different earlier in his narrative. After presenting the extract, I explore how he wants to be perceived by recounting this story. Beforehand, I should make it clear that I am not investigating his extract theologically; rather, I explore how he constructs his story by applying the first step of the analytic model in order to represent himself with his preferred identities at the moment of telling.

Table 16 Extract 7.2 (I: Ibrahim; S: Steven)

1	I	Could you tell me more about these questions?
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	S	I was asking questions about stories I wanted to know about Jesus, peace be upon him, I wanted to know what I need to do as a person, how can I be a good person, how do I get on the path to getting into paradise(.) and it was all very very light, wishy washy(.) I couldn't get very concrete stuff(.) it was that being a good person is don't lie, don't cheat, don't steal, don't commit fornication or anything like this. So that was understandable stuff(.) I mean it is simple(.) as a ten year old you don't think about fornication(.) you know you don't really cheat; what opportunity do you have to cheat at ten? Lying about what we know, yeah ok(.) it was there, the basics were there but it wasn't concrete stuff, tangible stuff(.) what you need to do for your life in general, not about stuff that you are already doing (.) it seems a bit easy(.) it was more about life(.) And I had other questions about you know the prophets, how did they live, where were they? You know it was interesting that I was trying actually to read the bible myself and I had questions that weren't getting answered about dates and where does it start, which chapter first and how did you go through them and understand things in lamentation times.
17	I	And it was in that age?
18 19 20 21 22	S	Yeah about twelve, thirteen and by the time when I got to fourteen I was already open to information (.) for example, if I met someone I wanted to know you know how can I get such a piece of information that I was interested in at that time(.) mainly it was about… you know Jesus in particular (.) this thing about Jesus was the trigger (.) there was something there about Jesus peace be upon him that was

23		a trigger (.) there was something I was not comfortable with or I didn't have quite
24		all the answers to (.) I was sitting there for ages for a long time.
25	I	Which part of that?
26	S	His speech (.) so in the bible I would be reading things, and I would say thing,
27		things would be printed in red and people would say to me this text in red was
28		said by.
29	I	Jesus.
30	S	Yeah, how and… in what context was this said and understood and how did you
31		know that this was said by Jesus? This is in English (.) how did they understand
32		it? How did they translate it in layman's terms into normal English that I can
33		.understand at eleven or twelve years old? How did they put this into context? So
34		some of the stuff was coming back to me **listen, don't worry too much about**
35		**this. You just have to just believe(.) just have faith and things just work**
36		**themselves out and leave everything with Jesus and he will guide you along**
37		**the way**(.) and again, this is not a concrete answer (.) I'm just trying to get
38		concrete a b c, step by step, what I have to do, what does this mean, ok what do I
39		do? Do I have to go through this door? Do I turn left, do I go right, do I sit on my
40		knees, do I pray this way, what am I doing? What is the procedure? Because I
41		was very technical because(.) I was on the route to becoming an engineer (.) I
42		didn't realize at that time, but this was how my brain worked(.) it was logic (.) it
43		was sequence(.) It was mapped out(.) I can flow chart. Eventually I did want to get
44		an engineering degree, which correlates with how I think (.) but anyway so… yah,
45		next thing.

In this extract, Steven narrates a story about the unanswered questions he had
about Christianity. He starts his account by reporting these questions: 'I wanted to
know about Jesus' (line 1); 'what I need to do as a person, how can I be a good
person' (lines 3 and 4). His need to develop his religious knowledge, which he had
linked to being a good person, shows that he centers what is good to that religiosity.
He sought theological knowledge, which would lead him 'the path to getting into
paradise' (line 4). Steven continues with his narrative of taking a stance before
reporting the questions' answers 'it was all very very light, wishy washy' (lines 4 and
5). He follows his stance by reporting the answers he received. All these answers
were 'more about life' (line 12). This shows how he projects two types of religiosities:
the concrete theological and simple and basic life knowledge. In doing so, he
centralizes his narrative around one character, himself, by his use of the first-person
pronoun 'I' being the most pervasive reference (lines 2 to 16). This shows how he

ascribes himself with a great deal of agency in raising the questions, challenging the answers and constructing concrete versus easy knowledge. This seems important for how he wants to be seen at the moment of interaction. This will be focused on in the next step of the analysis. While he elaborates on his questioning of the kind of knowledge he received, it can be seen that information was always accessed and exchanged through someone (line 19). In other words, he constructs his theological inquiry story by recounting how he would ask other people questions.

Steven goes on to dramatize his inquiry by complicating the event through bringing in 'Jesus' (line 21) and his speech (line 26) in the bible, which seems to be problematic for him and central to his doubts (lines 21 to 24). This is followed by questioning the ability of the English language to reflect the context of the text and he problematizes the legitimacy of the English language to contextualize the bible: 'How did they translate it in layman terms into normal English that I can understand at eleven or twelve years old?' (lines 32 and 33). Paradoxically, Steven confessed elsewhere in the data that he read the Quran and about Islam mainly in English. After this, Steven rhetorically shifts his voice by reporting the response of the Church's staff[4] to his questions: **'leave everything with Jesus and he will guide you along the way'** (lines 36 and 37). He again takes a stance towards their answer, viewing it as not concrete. Then he moves on to construct a persona of himself as a systematic thinker who seeks to 'get concrete a b c, step by step' (lines 37 and 38) and a logical child: 'this was how my brain worked. It was logic'. This is why he ended up as an engineer and presumably a Muslim. It is in his nature as a person of logic who is seeking concrete knowledge that was not offered by those

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[4] He referred to them in his narrative before this extract.

whom he asked. His nature allowed him to end up working with charts and presumably mathematics. He was seeking the technicalities (line 40) behind these questions, from his theological questions to his praying (line 40). On the other hand, this reciprocally positions those whom he was asking questions as lacking this logic and concreteness in their knowledge.

Having examined how Steven constructs his story and positions his characters, in the next step of the analytic model, I examine what Steven is trying to achieve by telling this story. He appears to share this story in order to maintain his persona of difference, which he constructs earlier in his narrative, by presenting himself as someone who had these concrete questions at a very early age, 'ten'. He also wants to be seen as a logical person who would question his religious faith by asking these concrete questions; he was different from the others who would answer his concrete questions with wishy-washy easy stuff. Meanwhile, Steven's theological questions are always brought up by Muslims to Christians (the issue of the bible translation and the order and nature of the prophets). It is as if he were trying to say that although he did not know about Islam at that stage of his life, he was still thinking like a Muslim which suggests that there is a retrospective mapping of his doubts into questions subsequently posed by Islam. This shows how he wants to construct a kind of continuity with himself being someone who used to think like a Muslim even before knowing about Islam. Steven's narrative correlates with Jalal's story as well as the argument of Nieuwkerk (2014) and Mahmood (2005) that usually converts constructed their stories by enacting a kind of continuity with who they were before converting to Islam, as they thought like Muslims even before they became so. In the next extract, I examine another story where Steven enacted difference and continuity

through narrating his story about how he was looking for a woman to marry at an early age in his life.

7.5 I wanted to get married

In this extract, I analyze a segment of Steven's narrative where he recounts how he wanted to marry a woman from an early age. This story was prompted by my question about his personal life (line 1). In my question, I was interested in eliciting some stories about gender and sexuality and how he would incorporate them into constructing his conversion story. In my analysis of this story, I focus on how Steven constructed the story of being good, normal and natural in response to my question about relationships.

Table 17 Extract 7.3 (I: Ibrahim; S: Steven)

1	I	And in terms of your personal life were you meeting anyone?
2	S	Ah at that stage about eighteen nineteen I wanted to get married actually.
3	I	You wanted to get married?
4	S	Yeah.
5	I	After you came out as a Muslim?
6 7	S	Well at eighteen, nineteen, I was actually not yet a Muslim(.) but in general I was actually looking for a companion.
8	I	Umm
9 10 11	S	Yah yah don't forget I was the only child(.) I was interested in this kind of thing from before(.) how to find a good woman (.) how to find a good… sincere… woman.
12	I	And you didn't meet any girl before that?
13	S	No I don't have, didn't really… no I was a good kid yayayah.
14	I	Interesting.
15	S	I didn't mess around or anything like that.
16	I	And that was normal in your family?
17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	S	No, it wasn't normal /laughs/ I was bullied for stuff like this because at school people say you know this is is is no fun at school(.) it was quite not easy(.) boys have to have girlfriends and be active(.) and I knew that wasn't correct(.) so when other older boys say [harsh sound] **girl yaya girl I would say yah but… I am not I don't wanna be with her...** like I wanna girl that I can marry I can love and be with(.) from a very young age I understood that and recognized that(.) so it didn't appeal to me(.) I wasn't act… I wasn't turned on that way my mind was clear and pure so it didn't

26		really, I was looking more for a woman I can marry and have a nice girl to be with rather than a girlfriend(.) yah…
27	I	That is interesting.
28	S	So it came all at the right time(.) yah so I really have that <u>natural</u> thing(.) I
29		was really in that direction(.) it was easy for me.

I start the analysis of this this extract, by applying step one of the analytic model in order to unpack the 'there and then' in Steven's recount. As it can be seen in the extract, Steven refers to different characters and arranges them in time and space to construct a story about what is good, normal and natural in sexual relationships. He narrates this story when he responds to my question about his personal life (line 1). He starts with emphasis that he wouldn't be in any relationship without being married. When I asked him if this was after he became a Muslim, he responded that it was before: 'I was actually not yet a Muslim but in general I was actually looking for a companion' (lines 6 and 7). In this utterance, he enacts continuity with his view of himself as a pure – already like a good Muslim, although not one yet in actuality, which corresponds to presenting himself as being Muslim in nature even before becoming one– this is made clearer at the end of the extract.

He elaborates that he wanted to have a companion, which seems to be only possible through marriage; it is as he were saying that marriage was his only way to have a relationship. Then he goes on to construct his narrative about the circumstance that constrained his way of understanding what a heterosexual relationship should look like by bringing in the fact that he was an only child; therefore, he was 'interested in' having this kind of relationship before he became a Muslim (line 9). He was trying to find a good sincere woman (lines 10 and 11). This good sincere woman was the companion that he could marry. When I asked again for confirmation that he did not

meet anyone,[5] he replied, 'I was a good kid' (line 13). He 'didn't mess around or anything like that' (line 15). Messing around, looking for a companion and wanting to get married are the very practices that constitute good and not good heterosexual relationships in Steven's narrative. This seems to be important to how Steven wants to be perceived, and I elaborate more on this when I apply the next step of the analytic model.

Moreover, when I brought in the issue of normality in a question about his approach towards heterosexual relationships, he positions himself as good and pure which makes him different. This caused him to be bullied to become engaged in such activities (line 21). He was bullied by people (line 18), or later the older boys (line 20), at school. In this, he dramatizes the experiences using the evaluative stance 'no fun' (line 18) and 'quite not easy' (lines 18 and 19). He elaborates more on the circumstance of being a good kid at school, and how he was constrained by the cultural norm that 'boys have to have girlfriends and be active' (line 19). He constructs this constraint using the circumstantial modal verb 'have to', followed by the adjective 'active' to construct the normality of having a girlfriend and being active in doing so.

He then elaborates more about his experience by reporting what seems to be a remembered/ imaginative dialogue between the older boys and him: '**girl yaya girl I would say yah but… I am not I don't wanna be with her**' (lines 20 and 21). He was clear and pure compared to those who were sexually active. Here he seems to place

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[5] I repeated my question as I felt I did not understand him because this was somewhat new to me; all the other informants showed some level of activity in having a heterosexual partner.

the older boys and himself in two positions: the normal messing-around boys versus the good pure kid (himself). Within these positions, the female body is represented first as the 'girl' (lines 20 and 21); the messing-around boys' sexual object; and second as the good sincere woman, the companion (lines 10 and 11) who could only be accessed through marriage. The female references in both positions appeared with no voice and always as an object; within these exchanges, females are inagentive actors in the boys' two sexual worlds of good and normality. Retrospectively, these bodies, in his recount, are positioned within these two worlds; on one hand 'the girl' that connotes sexuality is not described as good. On the other hand, there is 'the woman' who connotes companionship (marriage) and is sincere, nice and good. In addition, Steven again emphasizes his inherent Muslim nature 'I really have that natural thing I was really in that direction' (line 28). It was in his nature that he was good, resisting the expected norms. Again, the pureness of his mind explains his direction to Islam. Steven's last utterance seems to serve as a coda for this story. It was as if to say that he was naturally good, though different, and therefore he ended up being directed towards Islam by his nature.

I move now to the next step of the analytic model by examining Steven's preferred identities at the moment of interaction. In step one of analysing this extract, it has been illustrated how Steven has positioned his characters into three positions: good, normal and natural. He constructs these positions when recounting a story about heterosexual subjects (himself and the characters of the story) to a heterosexual subject (me: the interviewer). By sharing this story, Steven clearly prefers to be seen first as different: as a good kid who was different from the normal boys and would not mess around. This difference, which was ascribed as being natural later in his narrative, shows how he wants to enact continuity. He was already in the direction of

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being a Muslim. He was thinking like a Muslim and regulating his heterosexuality similar to the Islamic tradition, He seems to be suggesting that although he was not a Muslim at this time, he was constraining his heterosexuality through his, supposed, Islamic nature, which correlates with the Islamic discourses about heterosexuality. This reminds us of Jalal's story about how he was looking for a virgin in Chapter 6, section 6.6. It is also reminiscent of the Islamic discourse that everyone is born as a Muslim and that their parents change this. This is also a common narrative reported in Nieuwkerk (2014) and Ozyurek (2014). In the next section, I analyse another extract from Steven's narrative where he tells his mother's reaction to his conversion to Islam.

7.6 If I said I was gay, she'd be even happier

In this section, I present a segment of Steven's narrative from his life after he converted to Islam. I choose this segment because it shows the complexity of his conversion trajectory. It can be seen that Steven had difficulties and struggles after he told his parents he had become a Muslim. The story is also rich in details and themes that can function as focal points for analysis. I find that was consistent with how he preferred to be seen in earlier extracts. In Extract 7.4, I was asking Steven about his parents' reaction after he told them he was a Muslim, and he recounted the following:

Table 18 Extract 7.4 (I: Ibrahim; S: Steven)

1	S	Yeah I really can feel the tension or friction they sound awo offf [exhaling
2		to express shock](.) they didn't know anything(.) they were so aggressive
3		and against this different title(.) even though the way of life they are
4		happy, they are happy with me, but they were not happy with this title(.)
5		this new designation of appointing myself, of giving myself this new title(.)
6		they are not happy with that. Why? I'm the same person, improved,

7		refined, polished, cleaned up and acting responsibly and conducting
8		myself(.) and I should be as a young adult, they are happy with this, but
9		the title that comes with it they are not happy (.) so this was now the new
10		challenge. This new friction that I'm having in my life. Everything was
11		going well and I have this issue prominently with my mother(.) my father
12		was very easy-going cool ,no stress(.) no problem.
13	I	So he was just accepting that?
14	S	He was one bit whatever, he wasn't involved(.) he would say call yourself
15		pink panther /laugh/ he doesn't bother he is very easy(.) my mother on the
16		other hand someone had told her that, you know it will be easier on her to
17		tell her that if I said I was gay she would be even happier with that.
18	I	Rather than to.
19	S	Say that I'm Muslim(.) it is like **hang on for a second /laugh/ I think this**
20		**has changed(.) yhat's gonna affect, impact your life apart from how I**
21		**eat maybe(.) on top of that, she already purchases food which**
22		**complied with my faith.** My new faith didn't impact what she was
23		cooking really because she was cooking separate(.) so she was cooking
24		chicken(.) chickens were being purchased from a Pakistani halal
25		butcher(.) that is where she gets the meat from anyway.
26	I	Okay
27	S	So I didn't make any difference(.) so the issue was in her head, a
28		personal thing she subscribed to in her head.
29	I	What she was worried for?
30	S	I don't know(.) it was just personal to her(.) she had people she was
31		working with who are Muslim she was very friendly with and she loved(.)
32		yah, me using that title she hated with a passion.
33	I	And how did it feel?
34	S	I mainly realized that this thing is gonna be the beginning of many
35		challenges(.) this thing may not be well received by lots of people(.) my
36		own mother has that issue, other people may have an issue(.) is there
37		something I need to print and give people to clarify that misunderstanding
38		or are they getting confused with the nation or some deviant misguided
39		sects or whatever group(.) so yah I started to consult with people that may
40		have gone through that before and funnily enough most of those people
41		they didn't have any problem(.) the more religious the person was, when
42		you explain it to them, the more they respected you(.) but people that
43		were less religious seemed to have more problem maybe due to their
44		ignorance(.)they were just immature and very ignorant(.)they didn't want
45		to pay attention(.)they didn't really care for it they want to make fun or
46		have a laugh or they try to bully you or to make silly comments(.)the
47		people that were more learned that were more religiously aware Christian,
48		you'll find it you get better on them because they could see the similitude,
49		the similarities, the closeness between us that will on point with many
50		many points and then we diverge at the last all bits(.) so with these people
51		you will find it getting more with them, what I started to notice was that my
52		own mother, she was being not very knowledgeable(.) That's probably
53		where it is coming from, her lack of understanding or wanting to
54		understand(.) her pride or her stubbornness haven't an open mind(.)
56		because all people when you explain things would listen(.) you couldn't
57		even start to explain it to her(.) she will even stop listening.

In this extract, Steven refers to characters and arranges them in time to construct his story about telling his parents that he was now a Muslim. He starts his narrative by recalling his feelings when he told them about his new faith: 'I really can feel the tension or friction' (line 1). Then he starts to develop a position for his parents (mainly his mother) as not knowledgeable, 'they didn't know anything' (lines 1 and 2); this position will be developed firmly later in this extract. Because of their lack of knowledge, they 'were aggressive and against this different title' (line 2), the title refers to identifying himself as a Muslim. In his accounts he tells about his change to becoming better 'improved, refined, polished, cleaned up and acting responsibly' (lines 6 and 7). This change reminds us of the wishy-washy knowledge of what to do to be a good person, in Extract 7.2. However, these factors seem to be important here when he tells his parents that he was now a Muslim. His recount shows how narratives, at some moments, are incoherent in regard to specific meaning. However, the incoherence could facilitate the enacted identities. While his parents were happy about his general good behaviour, they did not accept him identifying as a Muslim. Interestingly, in his utterances 'appointing myself, of giving myself this new title' (lines 5 and 6), it can be seen that Steven is attributing agency to himself; the first personal reflexive pronoun in his account is the point at which his agency is attributed to himself.

Steven moves on in his narrative to share his parents' reaction; while his father was not bothered and did not have any problem whatsoever with what he wanted to call himself (lines 14 and 15), his mother was more resistant. Steven constructs his mother's resistance to be extreme to the extent that he suggests she would sooner accept him as gay – there by bringing in the topic homosexuality as a rhetorically unacceptable alternative: 'it will be easier on her to tell her that if I said I was gay she

would be even happier with that' (lines 16 and 17). Again, we can see a pattern of agency that is similar to the previous one. Steven begins his sentence with the first personal pronoun, which is followed by a predicate that implies the manifestation of a change. This reminds us of Austin's performative acts. Her denial and resistance suggest his assessment of her benightedness as well as his own heteronormative understanding of human beings. Positioning homosexuality to be possibly the most difficult identity to reveal and placing his new faith as more difficult to accept shows how he stigmatizes homosexuality to dramatize his experience. It was as if he were saying that his furious mother would accept this more than being a Muslim. He elaborates more by enacting a conversation between him and his mother '**hang on for a second /laugh/ I think this has changed(.) that's gonna affect, impact your life apart from how I eat maybe(.) on top of that, she already purchases food which complied with my faith**' (lines 19 and 22). Here the conversation is with his mother in which 'your' refers to her life. The point appears to be that he believes that his conversion does not require her to make any significant changes because she already cooks halal food. It is still the same way of living. But that it is 'in her head' (line 28) that the problem lays, which was occurring despite her having positive relations with Muslims (line 31). However, for her own son she hated the title of being a Muslim 'with a passion' (line 32). Using the expression 'hate with passion' shows his mother's stance which complicates the difficulty in his conversion trajectory.

Steven expands on his difficult circumstance in coming out as Muslim to his mother by amplifying the challenges to include 'lots of people' (line 35) who would share the same reaction as his mother (line 36). He then moves to complicate that experience by recounting his need to always correct misunderstandings caused by correlating

him being a Muslim with the nation of Islam or other 'deviant misguided sects or whatever group' (lines 38 and 39). These groups and sects might be contributing to the public discourse on Islam, especially the Nation of Islam, which particularly applies to people of African heritage like Steven.

Steven starts to construct difference again in his narrative. He recounts that he consulted 'people' (line 40) and reports they did not have the same experience as him.[6] He then shifts his narrative from his personal experience to a generic one by utilizing ambiguous references for more and less religious people. He appears to be enacting positions for those who are respectful versus denial or resistant to his new faith, which could correspond to other people's experience and his own. Those who are more religious (line 41) would respect him when he explained it to them (line 42). These were the practising Christians who would see similarity with their own religion and understand difference (lines 47 to 51). On the other hand, those who are less religious would have more problems because of their ignorance and immaturity; when he explains things, they would not listen. They 'try to bully you or to make silly comments' (lines 46 and 47). These were the less knowledgeable ones. After enacting these two positions, Steven turns back to his personal narrative, interestingly positioning his own mother as 'not very knowledgeable (.) That's probably where it is coming from, her lack of understanding or wanting to understand (.) Her pride or her stubbornness haven't an open mind' (lines 52 to 56) who, in any encounter with her He 'explain things would listen (.) you couldn't even start to explain it to her' (lines 56 and 57). In these last utterances, Steven presents his

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[6] Here he seems to be referring to his wife, whose her family were more open to her conversion than his own.

mother vividly which may be indicative of his ongoing struggle with her to accept his change. His positioning of his mother is interesting in terms of euphemism. He avoids saying she is ignorant and describes her as 'not very knowledgeable' (line 52).

I now move to the next step of the analytic model and examine the 'here and now' or the identities with which Steven prefers to be seen at the moment of interaction. Two identities were brought about by Steven when he narrated his story. First, he still wants to be seen as different. It was as if he were saying that unlike other people who he consulted and who had an easier experience, he was different in how his parents reacted to his conversion, especially his mother who was very resistant. This different persona is pervasive in Steven's narrative, as it has been brought about consistently in the early account about his life.[7] Second, Steven's recollection of the difficulty he had been through in sharing that he was now a Muslim shows that he wants to be seen as a struggler who had endured challenges in his conversion trajectory caused by his mother's rejection of his new faith. This shows the struggle that converts can face as a result of their religious conversion and the difficulties that their new Muslim identity can entail. Moreover, Steven stigmatization of homosexuality and his reference to his mother as unknowleagble rather than ignorant could indicate that he is enacting a kind of religious piety to which respect for his mother and heterosexuality are integral. In the next extract, I examine another story from Steven's narrative, where he tells a story about his professional identity.

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[7] I should say that Jalal in Chapter 6 had a similar experience with his mother.

7.7 A naked woman in the book

In this segment of Steven's story, I examine how he constructs his British and religious identities when he replied about how his embodiment of his religious identity could affect how he would be perceived as an authentic English-language teacher, (see section 1.3.4 chapter 1). Although my question is problematic, and I was not intended to question his identity, it provoked an interesting story. Before he starts narrating this story, we were exchanging comments about his beard (details below) and style of dressing and then I probed with the following question:

Table 19 Extract 7.5 (I: Ibrahim; S: Steven)

1 2	I	Don't you think it affects how you are perceived as an authentic English-language teacher?
3 4 5 6	S	Yeah it depends, if they hear me speak it can tell(.) the way I was educated it can show that I am from a certain part of the world, it can show my English is at a level where by … probably if they are educated(.) you know what I mean by that.
7	I	Okay
8 9 10 11 12 13 14	S	If they haven't got a <u>clue</u> they are thinking that I'm from India or from this place because that's what they used to see(.) they used to see people from India or Afghanistan (.) I excuse people because they don't know(.) they haven't come across people like you(.) what do you expect if you are the first kind of person that they actually have spoken to? And then they don't have the confidence to have spoken to someone before(.) they weren't able to read or to write(.) maybe they haven't got the internet.
15	**I**	**This is in public, isn't it?**
16	S	Yeah.
17	I	What about the institution?
18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	S	I don't have, you know they will perceive me to be more knowledgeable and a more respectful teacher(.) they will be more aware of doing things wrong in front of me because they think I know that this thing is wrong… So sometimes they are touching their beard to say, teacher, please touch your beard(.)I'm religious as well(.) can you please help me in some regard? So they linked it to say look **I have the same way of living, can you do something for me**? So yeah, they came to point to it to their advantage their preference to it in areas like when they say **teacher there is a naked women in the book** and touch their beard like come on(.)So they are linking so **we are religious why is there a half-naked woman**? The other guys don't care(.) because they are already on a different way of living for US culture blab la blab hip hop culture and I keep informing them about the bigger major stream of information(.)that's what they are gonna be exposed to the most from television etc(.) so they are not really

32		too bothered(.) other guys again they reference to the beard, they say
33		**come on teacher why we go for this material**(.)**it is your book, you**
34		**can edit it if you want to edit your book that's fine**(.)but I have to go
35		for the curriculum and so I have to put the picture on the screen. And it is
36		an exercise, it is education, and you need to know how to dialogue and
37		speak with women because it is part of the business part of the world so
38		when you defuse it and break it down like that, like they would say **ok ok**
39		**make it quick teacher please**(.) so it's ok It can work to my advantage.

I start the analysis of this extract by applying the first step of the analytic model. As can be seen in Extract 7.5, the story is loaded with details that can be very informative and could take the analyst in different directions. However, I intend to focus more on the parts of the story that are charged with the identities he wants to be seen with at the moment of interaction, which seem to be brought about by my interview questions in lines 1 and 17. Steven constructs the story and arranges characters in space and time in order to construct his national and religious identity. He starts his narrative by constructing the state-of-affairs of being misperceived by his students, using a modal verb 'can' followed by the mental state verb 'tell' (line 3). Being misperceived is conditional on their inability to recognize his Englishness and his education. This suggests that he presents himself from the way he spoke as being from a so-called inner circle country (Kachru, 1986) and, at the same time, that he was aware of how his blackness may have been interpreted by his students as suggesting he came from a so-called outer circle country. After that, he goes on to present the types of people who he encountered. First, there are the uneducated who have not the chance to be exposed to different types of people (line 13) (presumably Muslim, Black British), and 'haven't come across people like you' (line 11); again you here corresponds to himself similar to case in section 7.2 which suggests generic of the reference that does not exclude himself, which suggests that he is diffusing his agency in his account. These people who would not be able to

figure out his identity are the unknowledgeable and uneducated. Second, there are those who are educated and know who he is from the way he speaks and his education.

I then probed with a question to take his narrative onto the effect his religious embodiment had on his perception as an English-language teacher (line 17). He recounts that students would position him as respectful and knowledgeable (lines 18 and 19) by virtue of his religious and cultural knowledge. This knowledge is illustrated in two hypothetical instances in which he seems to amplify his cultural and religious intelligibility. First, he constructs a story where he brings in a cultural semiotic resource of a person touching his own beard or chin when he is appealing for something (line 21). This is a common behavior among Bedouins: when they are asking for help, they tend to touch their beard. To clarify, people across Arabia generally touch their beard below the chin and ask for help with a look of appeal; Steven would understand what it means to touch the beard in this way and would act accordingly by using his cultural knowledge and ability to communicate with the students.

He then brings in another hypothetical instance of a half-naked woman in a book (lines 25 and 26). He draws here on another cultural semiotic resource, whereby the male subjects touch their beards as if to comb it with their fingers while questioning something, in this case the presence of a scantily clad woman in the book that does not conform with local cultural norms, which simultaneously confirms their pious masculine identity. This can be seen when he reports the dialogue between him and the students: **'come on teacher why do we go for this material'** (line 33). Then he complicates the story when he reports that he, in some circumstances, has to put such pictures on the screen to do the exercise (line 35), and that these students

should know that it is part of the education process, which is constrained by the 'need to know how to dialogue and speak with women because it is part of the business part of the world' (lines 36 and 37). At the same time, he states that the also has other types of students who are different and more into the US culture – such as hip hop (line 28). These students are not really bothered about such things (lines 31 and 32). The naked women story is another example of doing homosociality which reminds us of Kiesling (2005).

In this extract Steven positions himself as someone who is culturally intelligent and whose cultural and religious knowledge helps him to understand the situation.

I now move to the next step of the analytic model, in which I examine how he wants to be perceived by me, the 'here and now'. First, he wants to be seen as the British Muslim who could still be British even with his beard and skin colour, which may make some Saudis think that he is from India or Afghanistan. He is British because of the way he speaks and the way he was educated. This is how his Britishness is constructed. Second, he wants to be seen as the intelligent religious language teacher who is knowledgeable about the cultural specificity of his students and how this could be advantageous because of his awareness of that culture. Therefore, he is able to deliver educational materials while understanding his students' specific cultural background. In this last story, difference is not attributed to his identity but to his students. The knowledgeable persona appears to be vital in how he wants to be seen. It also seems to enable him to address the threat of his identity contained in my questions which I feel caused an unintentional threat to his authenticity as an English speaker.

7.8 Concluding remarks on Steven's narrative

As stated in the previous analysis chapters, the identities brought about are contingent on the context of the interaction. It can be seen from the analysis presented so far for the segments taken from Steven's narrative that he had drawn on different linguistic practices to enable him to construct his story and enact the preferred identities he wants to bring about in his story. These practices are common among the other two participants in the previous two chapters, namely the use of different types of narratives (mainly generic and personal), the use of modality, reported speech, etc. However, what I have noticed in Steven's narrative style is that he tends to develop his stances before the narrated event to which these stances are oriented- like the case in his narrative orientation in Section 7.2 where he has started with evaluative elements and then has narrated the main events. This is also not common in the literature (Labov, 1972). This can be attributed, I would suggest, to the tendency in Steven's narrative to dramatize and complicate his account. This persona of difference has been pervasively brought up in Steven's story. I feel this was vital in how he wants to be seen by me at the moment of interaction. It is worth mentioning that this persona of difference or uniqueness has also featured with different degrees in the previous two cases. It was explicitly manifested in Jalal's story when he presented himself as different from other African-American kids, while Abdulrahim did not bring it overtly in his account but performed it through the vividness of his narrative. This uniqueness persona seems to be informed by a meta-narrative that constrains how these converts narrate their religious conversion. With regard to language, Steven also develops an incoherent position with regard to English as a liturgical language. In Extract 7.2 (line 32), he problematizes English as

legitimate for learning about Christianity, while at the same time stating that

he was utilizing it mostly in his Islamic reading and studies. This contradictory dual

role ascribed to English shows how an incoherent story world is constructed to enact

a coherent preferred identity of being a religious seeker.

It is also possible to argue that in Steven's narrative, which is interactionally co-

constructed between him and me, women's voices are largely absent (except for that

of his mother). These are the main points that I want to bring out before moving to

the next chapter of data analysis where I set out the story of last informant and the

second of the British with African background, Abdullah.

Chapter 8: Abdullah

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present Abdullah's life story, the second British convert, and the final participant of my research. I have selected five segments of Abdullah's narrative, which I found to be of key relevance for gender, religion and race. I start the chapter by presenting an overview of his life and then analyse his orientation to the narrative. This is followed by a segment from his story about the period before he converted to Islam. Then I analyse his story about his first encounter with Islam. I look at another story when he thought about applying for a teaching job. Finally, I examine his marriage story. At the end of the chapter, I draw some conclusions from the analysis of his life story. as mentioned earlier, these segments are chosen because they are integral to his enactment of gender and religion. Unlike the other three converts, race (for reasons discussed in the concluding chapter) was less indexed in Abdullah story.

8.2 An overview of Abdullah's life

Abdullah is Zambian British and was born in Zambia to healthcare professional parents. When he was six years old, his parents moved to work in South Africa and he and his three siblings were taken to their maternal grandparents to live in a farm in Zimbabwe. Abdullah started his education in a school in Zimbabwe, which he described as using English as a language of instruction. In addition, he had to learn

another language, 'Shona', at school which the older generation of his family used to use at home. He described his life in Zimbabwe as being happy; they had enough food to eat and enjoyed living at his grandparents' farm. Abdullah was raised a Catholic and used to be an altar boy. He described his family as religious; his grandmother used to regularly attend church, while he said that his grandfather was not attending the church and used to wear a white hat[8] to cover his head. This suggests that he was not Christian and might have been a Muslim (This was reported by Abdullah in the interviews).

When he was twelve years old, his parents moved to work in the UK, and he and his siblings followed them a year later. In the UK, Abdullah attended a Catholic school and described his living conditions as good. He reported that the area where he used to live was considered to be a white middle-class neighbourhood. At that time, he used to participate in religious activities and go on trips to France and Spain in the summertime with the church youth club. As he developed into his teenage years, he started to be less active in his religious participation and turned more to 'life things', as he described them (girls and music). He enrolled at university to do a degree in computer science. While he was recounting the story of his university years, religion and race were not salient However, when I asked him about the people he used to hang out with, he reported that they were mostly from a non-white background. Abdullah started his career in a phone company shop where he met Abdulraziq, a Somalian Dutchman who migrated to the UK when he was twelve. Abdullah presented meeting Abdulraziq to be his first real encounter with Islam and that he did

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[8] White hats are common among men in some Muslim communities especially among Asian and East Africans.

not recognize Muslims or know about Islam before he met him. Abdulraziq started to question Abdullah's religious belief by asking theological questions that made Abdullah start to think about Islam and consequently the idea of conversion. It is worth mentioning here that Abdullah presented a heroic character role for Abdulraziq, to whom he demonstrated great admiration. After being pushed to read the Quran, Abdullah converted to Islam and moved from his family home to live in an area with a greater Muslim population. However, his house was burgled, and he went back to his family home.

Abdulraziq started to teach Abdullah about the Quran and Arabic. A year after Abdullah's conversion, Abdulraziq moved to Saudi Arabia to do a degree in Islamic studies in Madinah. His move made Abdullah feel alone and he struggled in his classes. He thought of following the same path as Abdulraziq, but his application was not accepted by the university. Abdulraziq suggested that Abdullah could come to Saudi Arabia to teach English, and Abdullah was convinced by this idea. He obtained a CELTA certificate and took up a position at a language centre in North Saudi Arabia. While he was there, he attended religious and Arabic classes. He reported that people in these classes encouraged him to get married. After two attempts, Abdullah managed to get married to a Saudi-born woman of Pakistani heritage whose family used to be a neighbour to Abdulllah's friend. Abdullah found his marriage to a Saudi to be an opportunity for him to pick up Arabic from a native speaker. The wedding took place in Saudi Arabia and none of his family chose to attend. By the time I interviewed Abdullah, he had been a Muslim for six years and married for three years and had a daughter who he named Mary.

Abdullah used to have a Christian name and was advised by Abdulraziq to change his name to a more Islamic one; he suggested the name 'Abdullah'. While he did so,

he still maintained his name before conversion, so people used to call him by both names. Abdullah is fluent in both classical and colloquial Arabic. He reported that he and his wife visited his parents in the UK after the birth of their daughter and he still maintains good relations with his UK family.

Having briefly presented an overview of Abdullah's life, in the next section, I analyse Abdullah's narrative orientation.

8.3 It is very rare to find a Zimbabwean who doesn't speak English

The following is a story that Abdullah constructed about the place he came from. I find this segment interesting as I feel that Abdullah was influenced by the identity politics at the institution where he worked. To familiarize the reader with that, by the time I was carrying out my research, there were some new recruitment rules which made things problematic for black teachers who came from South Africa, as they were now no longer considered to be native English speakers. Consequently, some teachers did not get a contract renewal. The Saudi TESOL context is widely affected by what Holliday (2005) refers to as the ideology of English native speakerism where whiteness and being western are considered central. Although I do not subscribe to this ideology myself, I felt that Abdullah read me as potentially affected by this ideology. In this segment of Abdullah's narrative, I primarily focus on how he represented his linguistic identity.

Table 20 Extract 8.1 (I: Ibrahim; A: Abdullah)

1	A	I was born in Zambia in a city called Mufulira. It's a very small city and I don't
2		really remember much because we left when I was five years(.) we moved to
3		Zimbabwe when I was six years old and there I grew up(.) and in both countries I
4		remember that our families they were religious people(.) they were religious
5		Christian you know who would go to church every Sunday. (.) my mother go
6		more than once a week but I had no exposure to Islam(.) I didn't know anything
7	I	In both countries
8	A	Yes in both countries.

9	I	you used to be in Zambia and then you moved to Zimbabwe was it for job?
10 11 12 13 14 15	A	Yes yes. My mother is originally from Zimbabwe (.) so when we moved to Zimbabwe, my parents moved to south Africa because of the work (.) my dad is a nurse and my mum at that time she was a nurse. So they moved to south Africa. They left us in Zimbabwe with our grandparents also religious people(.) and… yes I got my early child education in Zimbabwe so we were communicating in English(.) em it is very rare to find a Zimbabwean who doesn't speak English.
16	I	English was the official language for and your local language is beside?
17	A	Yes there is also another language called Shona which I had to learn in school.
18	I	Did you use it at home?
19 20	A	Rarely rarely we spoke it but at the point now I forgotten it but now If I hear someone speak it I can aa…
21	I	You can pick some
22 23 24 25	A	Yes because I never had that much practice (.) we forgotten it so it's only the older generation in my family who speak it my mum and dad my older brother and me(.) my younger brothers and sisters em they can't speak it because they never had a practice(.) they only know English.
26	I	Were they born in Zimbabwe as well?
27	A	Yes they were born...
28	I	But still they don't speak it.
29	A	No they don't speak it.
30	I	when you were in Zimbabwe did your parents use it inside home?
31	A	Yes sometimes yes
32	I	So they communicate with it(.) to identify that there is an inherited language.
33 34	A	For them yes. They speak it fluently(.) they communicate with their parents and their grandparents.
35	I	Is it a language for a certain ethnic group in that term?
36 37 38	A	it's an official language we spoke it in the news the current and the former president they speak it(.) although they speak English they deliver in this language.
39	I	When it comes to education?
40 41	A	In education schools we attended we could only speak English(.) of course you can speak the other language but officially they teach us speaking English.
42		What about the relation between you and the other students?
43 44 45	A	We communicate in English usually(.) we communicate in English specially for us because they looked at us as from Zambia originally so they would communicate in English because they thinking we are foreigners.
46	I	Interesting.

I begin the analysis of this extract by applying the first step of the analysis method, examining how Abdullah positioned his characters and arranged them in time and space. As can be seen in the extract, Abdullah tells me about his homeland where he grew up. He narrates a complex story by associating himself with different places. He starts his narrative by stating that he was born in Zambia, the place he and his family left when he was six years old and could not remember many things about it

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(lines 1 and 2). He intentionally brings in Zambia to the story to help him present himself as a foreigner, which becomes clearer later in his narrative. The only event he brings up related to Zambia was that his family had left it when he was young (line 2). He then moves his story to Zimbabwe, which is where he places most of the emphasis. Places and characters were arranged in time and space to project his story world; and he brings in and positions characters (e.g., his family [line 4], his mother [line 5], his grandparents [line 13]) in relation to a central theme: his presentation of himself as a speaker of English.

As we see in line 4, Abdullah tries to add a religious story to his narrative as he was most probably influenced by my research interests, which he has been introduced to when he read the consent form and the information sheet. He evidently wants to directly orient his story to religion. He positions himself as religious, but he had not been exposed to Islam in his early life (lines 5 and 6). I tried to expand his narrative by asking him to elaborate on the reason for his family's move to Zimbabwe. Abdullah reports that his parents moved to South Africa to work as health professionals and left him and his siblings with their grandparents in Zimbabwe, where he obtained his early education (lines 13 and 14). He then presents himself as a speaker of English: 'we were communicating in English' (lines 14 and 15). He said that he spoke English and used it in an institutional setting, which presents him as a proficient speaker. He then shifts his personal narrative to what Baynham (2011) refers to as a generic narrative, stating that 'It is very rare to find a Zimbabwean who doesn't speak English' (lines 14 and 15). This shift in narrative type illustrates how Abdullah tries to diffuse his agency by shifting from a personal experience to a generic/factual narration of what seems to be the topicality of the event (Hill and Irvine, 1992).

When he responds to my question in line 16, he shares a circumstance where he 'had to' (line 17) learn Shona (the local language) in school; he uses the circumstantial modal verb 'had to', which shows how he wants to depict Shona as a kind of linguistic constraint in school; it was necessary or obligatory. This suggests that he may have wanted to distance himself from Shona, something which is also implicit when he reports that they rarely speak it at home and that 'I never had that much practice (.) We forgotten' (line 22). His statement suggests a positioning of Shona as an imposition linked to his geographical existence in Zimbabwe. It is a language that belongs to Zimbabwe and to the time they were there and only the older generation in his family speak it (his parents, himself and his brother) (line 23). His younger siblings cannot speak it because 'they never had a practice (.) They only know English' (line 24). He forgot it because he hadn't had much practice. All these statements suggest that Abdullah wants to depict himself as a non-fluent speaker of Shona. In addition, Abdullah denies that Shona was an inherited language for him (line 33). Despite his parents' use of Shona at home, he resists the notion that Shona was an inherited language for him. He then elaborates on the status of Shona by stating that it is an official language for Zimbabweans (line 36) and that news the current and the former president they speak it (.) Although they speak English they deliver in this language' (lines 36 to 38). This again suggests that Abdullah constructed a territorial position for Shona as a regional language that he encountered when he was in Zimbabwe.

After generically recounting the status of Shona, he shifts his narrative to the school he attended (presumably with his brother as he used 'we' in line 40); his response is triggered by my question in line 39. He reports that they were taught in English; it was the official language at school. When I tried to prompt stories about what their

relations were like with other students (line 41), he brings in the Zambian identity he enacts for himself early in this extract. He narrates how they were positioned as foreigners by students at school: 'we communicate in English specially for us because they looked at us as from Zambia originally so they would communicate in English because they thinking we are foreigners' (lines 43 to 45). He constructs this as a circumstance where they were seen as foreigners, so students would use the most available lingua franca to them, which was English. In other words, English seems to be positioned in this construct as their most available linguistic resource that would enable them to communicate with others in Zimbabwe.

Having analysed how Abdullah's narrative positioned his characters, I move on to the next step of the analytic model and address the preferred identities that Abdullah wants to be seen with at the moment of recounting his story. It is interesting how Abdullah opts to position himself in relation to English and Shona, and how he intentionally constructs the story about his linguistic repertoire in a way that distanced himself from Shona and aligned himself with English at the time when he was in Zimbabwe. This shows how he enacts his identity through constructing evidence about the linguistic practices in Zimbabwe. Consequently, he presents his preferred linguistic identity when interacting with me. This performative enactment of the story shows where Abdullah's agency originates from. As Hill and Irvine (1992) argue, the interlocutor's agency is constituted by how they interpret meaning and constructs evidence (the status Shona and English) and adopts positions (speaker of English and non-fluent speaker of Shona).

Abdullah interprets linguistic practices in Zimbabwe in accordance with how he wants to construct his evidence to support his claim to be an English speaker; this is the most salient self-identity he wants at this part of his story. Considering the

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context and the identity politics at the institution where Abdullah was working when I interviewed him, it can be argued that he wants to enact a linguistic identity for himself that minimized the threat of his identity as a native speaker of English, which might be triggered by the fact of being born in Zambia and raised in Zimbabwe. Therefore, Abdullah emphasizes his status as an English native speaker early in his narrative just to enable me to see him as an intelligible native English teacher (assuming he thought I was influenced by the identity politics of the institution). This identity is facilitated by the colonial history of Zimbabwe and what it entailed for English dominance in this country. In addition, as mentioned in the earlier in this section, it could be that Abdullah was motivated in his accounts by the view of people with African background with regard to what is so called English native speakerism in the Saudi context.

Having analysed Abdullah's narrative orientation, I move to the next segment of Abdullah's story in which he recounted a story about the religious trips he used to take when he was a teenager.

8.4 Religious trip

Having set out Abdullah's narrative orientation, in this section I analyse a segment of Abdullah's narrative about his teenage years in which he presented his upbringing as religious. I find this to be a common narrative among other converts and ascribed this to the influence of their families with converts having some level of agency over their desire to be religious. I have included this segment of Abdullah's narrative to show this commonality of religious upbringing narrative, which seems to help converts to enact the continuation of their religious identity throughout their narrative.

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In addition, I find that constructing girls to be a threat to their religiosity in their teenage years is also a common narrative; Abdullah is another example, albeit with less demonizing of girls than was the case with Abdulrahim and Jalal. Before Abdullah introduces the story in Extract 8.2, he tells me about his schooling after he and his family had moved to the UK. I asked him if there was anything he wanted to add. He then recounts the following story.

Table 21 Extract 8.2 (I: Ibrahim; A: Abdullah)

1	I	Is there anything that you want to say regarding this schooling time?
2 3 4	A	During those times I remember as I was sort of getting older that my parents started pushing us towards taking trips to other countries like France (.) we go to France a lot a lot.
5	I	Is that because France is catholic?
6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	A	Yes we go to catholic parts. It actually takes you also to the city and takes you to the mountains (.) you know school surrounded by city life so we go there for one week. And they were more than happy to pay for it because (.) perhaps they noticed that there is something that is influencing us. girls, music or things like that (.) so during that time we started to take more trips (.) you know we go to Spain(.) now when you think of people going to Spain you think of the beach, getting a tan, you know drinking but no. for us when we went to Spain it was for religious purposes(.) and we wouldn't travel with our parents(.) we travel as a group so the church organize a youth group.
15	I	So they were organized by the church.
16	A	<u>yes</u> By the church yeah and the parents would say yes they push you to go.
17	I	Is it a kind of pilgrimage?
18 19 20 21 22 23 24	A	It is it nnn, we went to those as well but they just call it a youth trip just for the youth(.) if your age maybe between 12 and 17 they gather everyone and they would say let's go(.) and they would have programs, have speakers speaking about religion, about moral so my parents really were encouraging me to do that(.) unfortunately for my other siblings they always rejected it(.) they didn't like it. But. I was wanting to be religious at that time, it doesn't hurt someone is going to pay for your trip to Spain so it seems fun at the time and I would go.

I start the analysis of Extract 8.2, by applying the first step of the analytic model. As it can be seen, Abdullah shares a story about his religious upbringing in which he arranges characters in time and space to construct a religious identity for his teenage self. First, he presents his parents as agentive in his religious upbringing: it was their desire to bring him up as religious. He uses a transitive statement, which

according to Duranti (1994) shows how much agency is ascribed to the subject. His parents 'started pushing us' (lines 3), with 'us' here presumably referring to him and his siblings. His parents wanted them to go on trips abroad. Abdullah elaborates on these trips by shifting his narrative to a generic form, which can be seen when he recounted his story using the present tense as in 'takes you' (line 6) and 'go there' (line 7). This is a common narrative practice used to diffuse responsibility, which resembles the findings of Baynham (2011) and Hill and Zepeda (1992). Abdullah then moves to construct an argument of causality: his parents 'were more than happy to pay' (line 8) for these trips because 'they [his parents] noticed that there is something that is influencing us. girls, music or things like that' (lines 8 and 9). Abdullah constructs a narrative of young people commonly being interested in girls and music. This is depicted as a kind of threat that his parents wanted to keep him and his siblings away from. Therefore, they pushed them to go on religious trips, as if they were something that could prevent him and his siblings from being involved with the other practices (girls and music). From the way that girls are constructed in Abdullah's narrative, he seems to construct a kind of a binary. On the one hand, there is the good of being associated with religion – this can be evidenced from his parents pushing him and his siblings to go on the trips. On the other hand, there is the bad (girls and music), which his parents noticed influenced him and his siblings. This is reminiscent of how girls are constructed in the other converts' stories (Abdulrahim, Jalal and Steven), in which girls are deliberately positioned in a good/bad binary which parallels being religious and being involved with girls. Abdullah elaborates more on the nature of their trips and differentiated between them and the common narrative about travelling. By using the mental state verb 'think', he hypothesizes a common narrative about travelling to Spain to be

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associated with 'the beach, getting a tan, you know drinking' (lines 11 and 12). Then

he shifts to a personal narrative when he compared those common trips with his

youth club trips; 'it was for religious purposes' (lines 12 and 13). In religious trips

there would be speakers who talked about religion and morals. This resonates with

the binary discussed above between religious trips versus girls and music. Abdullah

then moves on in his narrative to construct himself as agentive and willing to go on

the trips, while he constructs his siblings as rejecting these trips and being unwilling

to go on them: 'unfortunately for my other siblings they always rejected it (.) They

didn't like it. But. I was wanting to be religious at that time' (lines 22 and 23). These

utterances show his positioning himself as someone who wanted to be religious. He

foregrounds his own willingness to be religious in line with his parents' agency in

raising him as religious. At the same time, he positions his siblings as resistant and

presumably less religious.

Having examined how Abdullah constructs the story about religious trips in Extract

8.2, I move on to the next step of the analytic model and examine which identities he

prefers to claim for himself when he tells this story. I suggest that Abdullah wants to

present himself as someone who was brought up religious and that he had been

religious from a very early age, not just because of the manner of his upbringing; it

was something that he wanted for himself. This indicates that Abdullah tries to

construct continuity in his religious identity, which suggests that he enacts what

Bamberg (2011) calls a constancy of his identity during his change of religions. This

resembles Jalal and Steven, who have enacted a constant religious identity between

who they were after conversion and who they were as teenagers. The

constancy/continuity in Abdullah's narrative is achieved by claiming agency for

himself through expressing a desire to be religious and willing to go on the trips.

In the next extract, I examine another extract from Abdullah's narrative in which he constructs a story about how he came to know about Islam through a person he worked with at a phone company.

8.5 I always used to see this name above me

I have analysed two extracts from Abdullah's narrative from his life before he converted to Islam. In the following segment of Abdullah's story, I examine a story from his narrative after his conversion in which he recounted his first encounter with Islam in which he constructed a story about Abdulraziq; a person who he used to work with at a phone company. Abdulraziq's character appears to be very influential in Abdullah's conversion story. Therefore, I find it useful to analyse how he constructed his character and what we can learn from this story about how Abdullah wanted to be seen when he shared the story. As can be seen, the story has many themes that can be taken as points of analysis. However, I focus on how Abdullah positioned himself and Abdulraziq.

Table 22 Extract 8.3 (I: Ibrahim; A: Abdullah)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	**A**	I graduated. I got a job with a phone company(.) and I always used to see this name above me in front of the shop there used to be sales phone competition(.) there was a competition and I always used to see someone above me and this person I would ask where is he and they were telling me he was on holiday(.) his name was Abdulraziq but it was written Abdy in English as a short they called him Abdy(.) so when this person called Abdy finally came back from holiday, he actually was on a honeymoon(.) so when he came back to work (.) he introduced himself because I have been working there maybe before three weeks and I never met this person who was always above me on sales (.) and when he came back, he introduced himself he was a very nice guy and all of a sudden he asked me it was I like **aa are you Christian**? And I said **yes**(.) because I use to wear the rosary and I use to wear the bracelet(.) I was surprised why did he even ask and he was saying **okay(.)** because we had free time at work, we use to talk. He asked me a simple question like how is..
15	**I**	Before you go on can you tell me more about Abdulraziq? Where is he from?
16 17	**A**	Abdulraziq at that time he had a Dutch passport(.) but His origin is Somali and of course as you know a Somali has a lot of Muslims but because of the war they

18		migrated to Holland and had a Dutch passport and he came to the UK to work
19		and again had just graduated from university himself(.) he was working in this
20		phone shop(.) he just got married he used to ask me simple questions that I
21		couldn't answer even though I thought of myself of someone religious, he put
22		questions to me and I couldn't answer that questions and I got frustrated with
23		that.
24	**I**	Questions like what?
25	**A**	He would ask me like a simple question a simple question you would never
26		think(.) like **God created the earth and then rested in the seventh day how**
27		**can a god rest?** Rest meaning that he didn't do anything after that(.) I would
28		have these answers but I wouldn't be satisfied with the answer I gave and this is
29		my answer and I wouldn't satisfied with it but I had to say something (.) I really
30		annoyed me that every time he asked me that question about religion(.) so I
31		started wanted to do the same to him to ask him so I said **who are you?** And he
32		said **I'm a Muslim (.)** and I wanted to ask him something to show that he doesn't
33		know much about his religion and I couldn't do it (.) I couldn't put a question to
34		ask him about his religion.
35	**I**	Because you don't know.
36	**A**	I didn't at that time I didn't know about Islam. He was like **you can ask me but**
37		**you have to read about it first and I was like What do I read?** And he would
38		say **the English translation of Quran**(.) **what are you doing on Saturday?** We
39		had time and I was off and he said **Okay come with me to east London** which
40		is the Muslim part of London (.) they have school there so he said **it's easier to**
41		**find Islamic books so you can buy Quran(.) come with me**(.) The day came I
42		cancelled it I was like **I'm too tired** I wasn't interested(.) I thought this guy was
43		pushing this religion down my throat and we left it(.) and then he got the book he
44		said **read it** I took it and I was like okay **thank you very much** I put it aside(.)
45		the next day when he came to work, he asked **did you read it?** I said yes **what**
46		**do you think about the story of Jesus?** I'm like **Jesus? What do you know**
47		**about Jesus?** So this is my first exposure to Muslims belief in Jesus(.) I'm like
48		what **do you know about Jesus?** He was like **yah We have Jesus in Islam** So
49		now I'm curious because I'm thinking **don't you worship the moon? Don't you**
50		**worship the sand? Don't you eat cows because you worship it? You**
51		**worship this animal?** He **said no no no. you have no idea about Islam. I'm**
52		**like what do you have?** He said we believe in God. **We believe in one god** and
53		he told me about Mary and because I was catholic and I have the bracelet of
54		Mary's picture he went on this and he said yes **we believe in Jesus we believe**
55		**in Mary**(.) and I was completely shocked(.) I thought he was lying but I wanted to
56		read the book. Because he kept saying **read the book** (.) you will find out. And I
57		remember I said **ok and I do that systematically I'm gonna read until I find**
58		**something** (.) so when I started reading and I came across the names of
59		prophets they weren't written in Arabic they were written in English so they
60		wouldn't say Mousa they would say Moses in the translation (.) and I'm like **how**
61		**can this be here when it supposed to be in the bible** (.) I was completely
62		shocked. I cannot tell you how excited I was to tell people l**ook, this guys they**
63		**are not crazy after all (.) they are not completely crazy** (.) so I went to tell my
64		parents and they told me **not to look at this Christianity is enough for you** (.)
65		**a**nd I believe them when we had a conversation but I was too intrigued (.)
66		**b**ecause we had a lot of time at work I had the time to read and every time when
67		he was coming he told me a story. He told me the story about Jonah and I'm like
68		we have that story(.) who talk about Abraham and I'm like yes I know these
69		people. And he told me these stories and I'm like how do you know this. He said
70		it's in the Quran(.) so when I read it I read it I read it I found it completely

71		beautiful the stories (.) now I started looking at the differences between religions.
72		I'm like **why are you not Christian** if you believe this and then he sat me down,
73		he explained what the differences were and then he would ask me questions(.) I
74		remember he asked me question who is Jesus and I couldn't really answer him
75		because every answer gave like a contradiction he asked me about trinity I could
76		not explain that(.) that was so difficult I could not explain it(.) and even if
77		explained it I will be lying to him because I didn't have the knowledge to counter
78		this question(.) and after that I read it I went home I told my parents that I want to
79		become a Muslim.

At the beginning of the analysis, I apply the first step of the analytic model by examining how Abdullah constructs his story and positioned his characters. Abdullah starts this segment of his narrative by dramatizing his introduction of his main character, Abdulraziq, who had led Abdullah to be Muslim. First, he brings in the competition story; he recounts how he got to know about Abdulraziq by reporting that he noticed his name always beating him in the sales competition. In this construct, he seems to enact a position for Abdulraziq as being superior: 'I always used to see this name above me in front of the shop there used to be sales phone competition' (lines 1 and 2). It also can be argued from his narrative that he constructs a work-based speech community: 'it was written Abdy in English as a short' (line 6) and he refers to those who called him as 'they called him Abdy' (line 6). This indicates that he does not include himself within that community, as if so, 'we' would be used instead of 'they'. This indicates that he positions himself as a newcomer to the workplace which enables him to dramatize his introduction of Abdulraziq. Abdullah then moves on in his narrative to report Abdulraziq's theological questions; which indicates that Abdullah puts more to emphasis on positioning Abdulraziq as superior. It is worth mentioning here that these questions are used as a common strategy among Islamic preachers, who start their *Da'wat* by questioning the core of the Christian belief about God and Jesus; this reminds us of Abdulrahim and

Steven's conversion stories; this is also reported in Kose (1996) and Ozyurek (2014) who finds that the Islamic view about divinity and Jesus attracted many Christians to convert to Islam. However, what can be noticed in Abdullah's narrative is his projection of Abdulraziq's agency by blending his voice in the reporting of their dialogue (lines 26 to 35); according to Besnier (1992), Hill and Irvine (1992) and De Fina (2003), narrators tend to ascribe agency to their story characters by explicitly reporting their speech in order to diffuse agency and consequently his responsibility for knowledge. Although it could be possibly argued that this dialogue is hypothetical what matters here is how characters' agency is constructed to enable the narrator to project his/her preferred identities in their narrative account. Abdullah constructs and positioned Abdulraziq as an agentive and powerful character who cannot be beaten, first in the phone sales and then with his religion.

After encountering the situation with Abdulraziq in which his religious belief was questioned, Abdullah tried to defend his belief by trying to counter Abdulraziq's questions with questions about Islam: 'I wanted to ask him something to show that he doesn't know much about his religion and I couldn't do it' (lines 32 and 33), but he was not successful. This indicates that Abdullah positioned himself as less powerful and less knowledgeable. This can be seen in his use of the circumstantial modal construction in 'I couldn't do it' (line 33); he couldn't challenge Abdulraziq's belief like he did to him. Then he moves to narrate how Abdulraziq was imposing his questions more and pushing him to read the English translation of the Quran. Again, he rhetorically recounts this by reporting his dialogue with Abdulraziq, which emphasizes the agency he ascribes to Abdulraziq. In this part of the narrative, Abdullah represents himself as resistant when Abdulraziq tried to make him read the Quran: 'I cancelled it (.) I was like **I'm too tired** I wasn't interested (.) I thought this

guy was pushing this religion down my throat' (lines 41 and 42). Abdullah reports that despite turning down the opportunity to go with Abdulraziq to the area where Islamic bookshops are based, Abdulraziq bought him a copy of the Quran. He still was not interested enough to read it. It was not until Abdulraziq brought in Jesus to the story that Abdullah became interested. Abdullah enacts himself as shocked and unknowledgeable about the nature of Islamic belief. He rhetorically constructs this by reporting his dialogue with Abdulraziq, in which he presents the idea that he perceived Islam as a polytheistic belief: '**Don't you worship the sand? Don't you eat cows because you worship it? You worship this animal?**' (lines 49 to 51). Because of his Christianity 'because I was catholic' (line 53), he wanted to read the Quran to find something to challenge Abdulraziq with. However, he depicts himself after he read it as accepting what he had read; this is rhetorically achieved by using the intensifiers 'shocked' and 'excited' (line 62), which shows how he constantly dramatizes his encounter with Islam.

He then brings his parents into the story: 'I went to tell my parents and they told me **not to look at this Christianity is enough for you** (.) and I believe them when we had a conversation, but I was too intrigued' (lines 64 to 66). Again, it can be seen that he uses reported speech to enact his parents' reaction to his discovery about Islam. This shows that Abdullah diffuses his agency in his encounter with Islam. He positions his parents as dismissive and reports that they rejected his interest in Islam. However, he was still intrigued about Islam and continued to talk with Abdulraziq about it. They would talk about the similarity between Christianity and Islam. He constructs this by reporting that Abdulraziq told him about the prophets (Jonah and Abraham in [lines 65 and 66]) to portray the similarities. He uses the English version of the prophets' names and not the Arabic ones, which shows the

role of English as a liturgical language at this stage of his knowledge about Islam. As Abdulraziq told the stories, he was raising Abdullah's doubts about Christianity through reporting the differences between the two religions in terms of Jesus and the trinity. In this construct, Abdullah is persistent in positioning Abdulraziq as knowledgeable and powerful. In contrast, he positions himself as powerless and unknowledgeable. He ends this story with an utterance that could serve as a coda, in a Labovian sense: 'I told my parents that I want to become a Muslim' (lines 78 and 79). Abdullah appears to agentively align himself with Abdulraziq's knowledge over that of his parents, and his agency stems from his use of the verb 'want'; he told his parents that he wanted to be a Muslim despite their previous conversation with him. Having analysed how Abdullah constructs his story world, I move on to the next step of the analytic model and explore which identities Abdullah wants to be seen with by narrating this story. First, it is obvious that Abdullah wants to present himself as someone religious. In fact, he overtly said that 'I thought of myself of someone religious' (line 21). He wants to be seen as a religious Christian who would defend his religion - this can be seen when he decided to read Quran to challenge Abdulraziq about Islam, and who came from a religious family. This appears to be appealing for Abdullah as he wanted to construct a constant religious identity over the period in which he changed religions. Second, Abdullah presents Abdulraziq as the perfect superior man who is successful in his work and knowledgeable about his religion. Constructing Abdulraziq as a hero in the form of a heroic character seems to justify why Abdullah followed him by converting. It is as if he was saying that he followed him because he conveyed a true message of *Allāh* and his prophets. This indicates that Abdullah wants to be seen as a continuous seeker of true knowledge. These two identities (religious and a seeker of truth) suggest that Abdullah tries to

enact continuity in his religious identity throughout his story of religious conversion. He changed his belief because he was shown the 'contradiction' (line 75) and was told the explanation for these contradictions. Though he was shocked, and he wondered about the Islamic narrative about Jesus, he wanted to be a Muslim because he was religious, and he found in Islam the knowledge that did not contradict in the stories about the prophets and Jesus regardless of his parents' reaction.

In the next extract, I look at how Abdullah came to think about starting a teaching job in order to move to Saudi Arabia.

8.6 I felt isolated

In this section, I analyse a segment from Abdullah's narrative after he converted to Islam. Before he narrated the story in this section, he had been telling me about his life after conversion. He told me that Abdulraziq advised him to change his name to a more Islamic one and to move to a more Islamic area. He followed his advice but struggled in settling into his new home. Therefore, he moved back to his family home. He also told me that he had been spending more time with Abdulraziq and that he used to visit his family home quite often. Abdulraziq was also teaching him about Islam and Arabic. Then he shares the following story, reproduced in Extract 8.4.

Table 23 Extract 8.4 (I: Ibrahim; A: Abdullah)

1	A	The only thing with Abdulraziq he left to come to study in Medinah and when he
2		left I had a bit of a problem(.) because I would still go to the same mosque but I
3		didn't have other Muslim friends who I could hang around with(.) so I found
4		myself in a bit of isolated(.) very very isolated and even reading practicing Arabic
5		that went with him
6	I	So he speaks Arabic
7	A	Yeah he speaks very good Arabic(.) so even just teaching me and reading the
8		Quran that affected me when he went away.
9	I	He went to study. Was it a scholarship?
10	A	Yeah it was he had to do 2 years of Arabic and then he would go to a faculty of
11		Hadith or Quran(.) that was at the end of 2012(.) we worked there maybe around
12		a year before he got the scholarship and came to Medinah so I think his
13		scholarship started in 2013 and I felt isolated(.) I managed to stay at the same
14		workplace and actually I applied to come to Medina also but my application it just
15		never been processed(.) it's pending I never gave up hope but he suggested to
16		me that the other thing I could do was this point(.) he knew that I intended to
17		come to Saudi Arabia and he suggested to me that since you were teaching
18	I	You were teaching at that time?
19	A	No I wasn't teaching I was thinking about teaching because of my background in
20		computing, I wanted to go back to school and get a PGCE so that I could start
21		teaching(.) but he suggested that perhaps I should look into an English course
22		and it could be a pathway to come to Saudi Arabia and to teach(.) so I said **ok**
23		**but could I teach IT?** He said **no, you would have to teach English(**.) I went
24		to the college where he studied in and I spoke to them (.) he convinced me that
25		there were more opportunities for English rather than IT which I took as a sign to
26		say (.) perhaps I should look into this because I could always come back and do
27		my PGCE if this didn't work out(.) so while I was still working there, I would study
28		for 2 days on Tuesdays and Thursdays
29	I	was it the CELTA?
30	A	Yes I was doing my CELTA qualification because fairly enough Abdulraziq did it
31		when he finished university just as a pathway but he never really use it(.) and he
32		suggested that but he had friends who had used this CELTA qualification so also
33		he suggested it to me (.) I was working and because at that time it was too cheap
34		and they only made two days off work and I had two days off work anyway(.) so I
35		used that time to do the CELTA this also helped in communication with
36		Abdulraziq because I would ask him about certain things what to do and I didn't
37		feel isolated anymore(.) you know and he introduced me to the Imam of the
38		Masjid and he told me that they were doing some Arabic courses, the Medina
39		books that was helpful(.) so I felt that it took away the isolation I was busy I was
40		working I was studying my CELTA and I was also learning Arabic(.) that was a
41		helpful period from 2013 to 2014

In applying the first step of the analytic model for Extract 8.4, I look at Abdullah's

story about his struggles after Abdulraizq left the UK to move to Saudi Arabia. I begin

the analysis of this segment of his narrative by examining how Abdullah constructs

his story and positions its characters. He starts the story by constructing the

circumstance of being without Abdulraziq: 'he left to come to study in Medinah' (line

1); this utterance serves as an orientation to the story he was about to start. Then he reflects on the event by taking a stance: 'a bit of a problem' (line 2). He moves to elaborate on this circumstance by reporting how he was constrained by Abdulraziq's absence in the mosque as he was his only Muslim friend who he 'could hang around with' (line 3). Consequently, he felt 'very very isolated' (line 4). The circumstance Abdullah constructs in these utterances indicates how Abdullah's Islamic social life was dependent on Abdulraziq. Although Abdullah was still living with his parents, he depicts himself as isolated, which indicates that he lost his social world when his only Muslim friend had left; this also suggests that his parents did not compensate for this absence. Abdullah adds detail to his story by reporting the consequences of Abdulraziq leaving: he stopped learning Arabic (line 4), and his Quran reading was affected (line 8). Abdullah then moves on to explain what he was doing when Abdullah left. He reports that he still had the same job at the phone company while he was trying to follow Abdulraziq by applying to come to Madinah. However, his application was not successful, but he never gave up trying. Abdullah then elaborates further and reported that Abdulraziq suggested he should apply for a teaching job so that Abdullah could come to Saudi Arabia. Ascribing the idea of the teaching job to Abdulraziq shows how he is constructed as a very influential person. Moreover, Abdullah reports that he had previously thought of the idea of teaching, and that he wanted to do a PGCE (line 20) to teach IT, but Abdulraziq suggested English as an alternative way to go to Saudi Arabia (lines 21 and 22). Abdullah elaborates by constructing the following dialogue: 'so I said **ok but could I teach IT? He said no, you would have to teach English**' (lines 22 and 23). Abdullah uses reported speech in this construct which, according to Besnier (1992) and Hill and Zapeda (1992), shows how the narrator diffuses control of the utterances made. That

is to say, Abdullah diffuses his responsibility for his story to Abdulraziq, whom he persistently constructed as more powerful and knowledgeable. On the other hand, he constructs himself as someone who was relatively powerless, who would follow what Abdulraziq said.

Abdullah went to the college where Abdulraziq had obtained his CELTA, which he had never used (line 28). We can see that Abdullah used 'suggest' (lines 15, 17, 21, 32, 33) regularly in Extract 8.4. This is a transitive verb reporting three arguments made by Abdulrazig, with Abdullah positioned as the indirect patient of the argument or the indirect object. It can be argued that this narrative practice emphasizes the agency ascribed to Abdulraziq and how inagentive he presented himself, which resembles Duranti's (1994) report that the argument structure contributes to the agency of the characters. Moreover, Abdullah explains that by enrolling on the CELTA course, he managed to overcome the constraint of Abdulraziq's absence. This 'helped in communication with Abdulraziq' (line 33). Consequently, he was told about an Arabic course by Abdulraziq. By working and studying, 'it took away the isolation' (lines 36 and 37). According to Labov's (1972) narrative structure, this latter utterance serves as a coda in Abdullah's story about being isolated, which contributes to the preferred identities Abdullah brought in at the moment of the interaction.

Having examined how Abdullah constructs the story and positions its characters, I move to the next step of the analytic model and try to unpack the preferred identities Abdullah wants to be seen to have. First, it appears that Abdullah wants to be seen as a social struggler whose decision to become a Muslim had affected his life. He was isolated despite living with his parents. Abdullah's narrative suggests that he had lost his pre-conversion social world, which is a common narrative among

religious converts, as reported in Kose (1996) and Ozuyrek (2014). However, in Abdullah's case, it seems that there was some complexity; he was an adult living in his parents' home, but he was still isolated. It seems that what Abdullah had lost was not the social world, but his charismatic influencer who led him to Islam and he struggled without having him around. This struggler identity, which he wants to be seen to have, feeds into what might be called the achiever identity. This can be traced in how he constructs the way in which he overcame Abdulraziq's absence at the end of the extract, which suggests that he wants to present himself as an achiever who despite his struggle of being isolated managed to counter the isolation by going to the mosque for an Arabic class, attending the CELTA course and working at the shop. It also can be argued that these two identities lead to the more dominant identity that Abdullah tends to bring in, which is the brotherhood identity: the religious social connection that linked the Muslim men. It also corresponds to doing homosociality. This link is explored more in the next extract in which he recounted a story about how he got married.

8.7 The problem was the language

After Abdullah had completed his CELTA course, he got a job in Saudi Arabia, but not in the holy city of Madinah where Abdulraziq was studying. He started his teaching occupation in the northern region. When he was there, he started thinking about getting married and he shares the story in Extract 8.5. I have chosen this segment of Abdullah's narrative for analysis as I find it helps to show how he made sense of gender relations, and how he also enacts men's talk that entails male solidarity. I also find it relevant to how he ascribes and diffuses the agency and

responsibility for his story. Before he shares the story in Extract 8.5, I asked him how

he came to marry in Saudi Arabia, and he starts narrating the following story.

Table 24 Extract 8.5 (I: Ibrahim; A: Abdullah)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	A	while I was working in Tabuk and we had these religious activities(.) people would ask me **whether I'm married** and I would say **no** so they would ask me **what I'm waiting for** and I really couldn't give them an answer(.) but I told them that **I was actively looking**(.) but ideally I was actually looking back in the UK I would like to get married back in the UK(.) I actually traveled one winter for a few days just to have a meeting with one lovely lady but the father for many reasons he didn't like the idea of us getting married(.) so when I came back to Tabuk
8 9	I	Can I ask you how did you arrange that meeting? Was it via someone or you use a social network?
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	A	Very good yes so our local mosque they have a website for those brothers and sister who want to get married(.) so you can view a profile of someone the profile has limited details. It doesn't have a lot of information(.) so what you should do if you want to find out more information, you would have to email the administrator of the mosque and then he would inform the imam and the imam would arrange a meeting for you both(.) so I did that and I met the imam I met the brother of the sister and we got talking and the last step was to meet the father(.) I actually didn't meet him at the end because the father was from Manchester, but he called. he apologized He said **no I don't like the idea of you getting married to my daughter** because he had the cultural leniencies he wanted someone from his own culture.
21	I	From his own community
22 23	A	yes not just from his own community he specifically wanted someone from his own tribe.
24	I	I know Somali they are very tribal.
25 26 27 28 29 30 31	A	So I understood that because it was expected My only concern was why did you let it get this far? Because we had been in communication for a while(.) while I was in Tabuk we have been in communication so I said **you could have stopped it at the beginning rather than me to come to the UK for a few days just for this** specific reason but he apologized and apologized once again(.) so I came back to Tabuk and one of the teachers, the American teacher I mentioned earlier.
32	I	You mean the Jordanian American one.
33 34 35 36 37	A	Yeh, so he suggested that he had a neighbor(.) he used to live in a small compound private resident and he said I have a neighbor who has got a few daughters (.) maybe I could mention something to him originally I asked **where she was from** and their background and he was like **they are from Pakistan** (.) so naturally I rejected this idea.
38	I	Do you think that it's a totally different culture?
39 40 41 42	A	It is not that. They are also very very tribal because I had the same problem in the UK and I didn't want to start something when I already know the result (.) so this brother … he managed to convince me like **no they are different because they are religious and they have been here in Saudi Arabia for a while** (.)

43		and the father had actually told him that he was looking to marry one of his
44		daughters or the rest of his daughters outside his family his tribe because two of
45		his daughters already married to someone within the family (.) so he said no this
46		time **he wants outside the family because it is less complicated** and
47		everything else. the problem was the language because I was still learning I have
48		mentioned this (.) he said **can you express yourself** and I said I **can try**.
49	I	What language they speak.
50	A	They speak Arabic and some Balushi(.) so what happened as I mentioned this to
51		my friend the language is problematic because I asked my friend **did they speak**
52		**English?** He said **no and** I said **ok I don't think my Arabic is good enough**
53		and **he said ok let's have a conversation** (.) so he started speaking and I could
54		not understand a word he was saying.
55	I	was he using a colloquial.
56	A	Because he is using a colloquial Arabic(.) I said I do not understand a word he is
57		saying (.) so he said ok **what have you been learning?** He said you **should be**
58		**able to produce(**.) I said no **I can produce the classic Arabic** he said **can you**
59		**speak classic Arabic?** And then he started speaking classic Arabic and It was
60		like a light that had been turned in a dark room(.) I said like **yes I can**
61		**understand you now** (.) so we started speaking like **what do you want? Why**
62		**do you want to get married?** I was able to answer these questions he was like
63		what are you looking for? I was able to answer this question(.) and he was like
64		**ok I think you should meet the fathe**r (.) the father mmm … our meeting was
65		problematic because he is used to colloquial Arabic He wasn't educated(.) he
66		grew up here but he didn't go to school(.) he was working from an early age so
67		when he was speaking I could not understand a word he was saying so what my
68		friend started doing? He started.
69	I	Translating.
70	A	I can't say translating he started changing the sentences into classic so I could
71		understand (.) it was a strange meeting a really really strange meeting because I
72		was like no this is not gonna work but the father said **you know my daughter**
73		**speaks classic Arabic because she has been educated and went to a**
74		**religious school** (.) so maybe you could be able to communicate for me this
75		was very attractive what an opportunity to learn Arabic without paying for it from
76		a native speaker and it worked.

As it can be seen in extract 8.5, Abdullah constructs his marriage story as being

constrained by two factors: his ethnic background and his linguistic repertoire. In

applying the first analysis step of the analytic model, I analyse how he constructs

these constraints and how he positions his characters. Abdullah starts his marriage

story by reporting the dialogue between him and the other Muslim (males[9]) in the religious activities: 'people would ask me **whether I'm married** and I would say **no** so they would ask me **what I'm waiting for**' (lines 1 and 2). Abdullah diffuses his responsibility for the idea of getting married by ascribing it to people's inquiry about his marital status. This is followed by his response to their question in which he reports that he was actively trying to address this matter. He reiterates a common narrative heard among Muslim males on the topic of marriage to a non-married Muslim. He then moves to recount a story about an attempt he made back in the UK while he was living in Saudi Arabia. He used a website managed by the mosque: 'I actually travelled one winter for a few days just to have a meeting with one lovely lady' (lines 5 and 6). However, the father of his prospective wife blocked his attempt 'for many reasons he didn't like the idea of us getting married' (lines 6 and 7). His first attempt story illustrates how Abdullah constructs the marriage proposal to be male centric. First, there is the administrator of the mosque whom he refers to as 'he' (line 14), which indicates his gender as male. Then there is the Imam, who would meet the brother of the sister (line 14), also there is the brother who he had met and talked to along with the Imam (line 15). After that, there is the father who would make the decision over the marriage proposal (line 16). At the same time, the only reference to the woman is when he started the story. Abdullah constructs all these males as being agentive in making the decision about his marriage to the 'lovely lady' (line 6), who had no voice in his story. Therefore, it could be argued that

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[9] Religious activities including prayers, religious classes and any other religious rituals in Saudi Arabia are gender segregated. Therefore, he referred to males when he said 'people'.

Abdullah enacts a masculine identity through centralizing the marriage proposal to be male business, which also conforms with the Islamic tradition of the *Walī* [10] (the guardian). And indeed, this is the way in which marriages are arranged in the Saudi context, as essentially an affair handled by men. In telling his story in this way, he also presents himself to me as entirely orthodox in his approach to seeking a wife. However, this attempt was constrained by his ethnic identity. Though Abdullah is a Muslim with African heritage, this was insufficient to make him eligible to marry a Somalian woman because the father wanted a Somali husband for his daughter: 'He wanted someone from his own culture' (lines 19 and 20).

Abdullah came back to Saudi Arabia and a Jordanian American teacher (line 30 to 32), whom he met in Saudi Arabia and helped Abdullah to settle in and enrol in religious and language classes, suggested that Abdullah could propose to his neighbour's daughter. Abdullah feared that a second attempt with someone with a different background would not be successful: 'I asked **where she was from** and their background and he was like **they are from Pakistan** (.) so naturally I rejected this idea' (lines 35 to 37). He reports that they are 'very very tribal' (line 39). Therefore, he thought he should not make the attempt: 'I didn't want to start something when I already know the result' (line 40). However, the Jordanian American brother convinced him. Again, Abdullah reports their conversation to construct how he was convinced: 'like **no they are different because they are religious and they have been here in Saudi Arabia for a while'** (lines 41 and 42).

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[10] The concept of the guardian in Islamic traditions refers to the male responsible for the marriage of a female. He usually meets the groom and should in some cases attend the contract signing.

Abdullah uses the quotative element 'like' followed by his friend's reply, in which he positions his neighbour as religious. Therefore, he was able to overcome the constraint of the difference in backgrounds. He also indirectly reports what his friend told him about the father's desire to marry his daughter to someone outside the family (line 44). This shows that religion seemed to help Abdullah overcome his background constraint. That is to say, Abdullah's friend's positioning of the family as religious indicates they would prioritize religion over ethnic differences, which is something enhanced by Islamic traditions.

Abdullah then moves on to introduce the second constraint in his marriage story, which was the language (line 47). The Pakistani Saudi woman did not speak English and he could not speak colloquial Arabic. In this construct, Abdullah uses reported speech, in which he recounts his dialogue with the Jordanian American teacher who was trying to discover his level of Arabic (lines 48). Abdullah positions himself as rejecting the idea, while his friend was determined that it would work: 'I said **ok I don't think my Arabic is good enough** and **he said ok let's have a conversation'** (lines 52 and 53). Abdullah struggled to understand when his friend talked to him in colloquial Arabic. However, it was a relief after they shifted to classical Arabic: 'it was like a light that had been turned in a dark room' (lines 59 and 60). Abdullah recounts how he was able to answer in classical Arabic the commonly asked questions in a proposal ceremony[11] like '**what do you want? Why do you want to get married?** I was able to answer these questions' (lines 61 and 62). Therefore, his friend

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[11] In many traditional Muslim communities, usually the father asks the man who is proposing to his daughter questions and based on their answers their proposal is either considered or rejected.

suggested that he could meet the father: '**ok I think you should meet the father'** (lines 63 and 64). Abdullah takes a stance towards the meeting as problematic; the father was only using colloquial Arabic because he was not educated (line 64), and Abdullah could not understand him, and his friend was 'changing the sentences into classic' (line 70). As can be seen, Abdullah preferred listening to changed sentences rather than translation, which suggests that he wanted a certain linguistic identity for himself: this will be analysed in the next step of the analysis. Abdullah then shows his stance to that meeting using the intensifiers 'really really strange' (line 72). He felt that it was not going to work, but the father intervened and said '**you know my daughter speaks classic Arabic because she has been educated and went to a religious school'** (lines 72 to 74). Bringing in the father's utterance shows that Abdullah again was helped because of his religion. The woman he wanted to marry had been religiously educated and was able to speak classical Arabic. He then adopts a stance towards that circumstance as 'very attractive' (line 75). His marriage would be an 'opportunity' (line 75) to learn the language from a native speaker without paying for it. At the end, he reported that 'it worked' (line 76), a statement that could be taken as a coda to his marriage story.

Although he was suspicious about his proposal and did not want to go ahead, his friend and his prospective father-in-law managed to convince him that it would work, and it did. It can be argued that Abdullah deliberately uses reported speech when he enacts himself as less agentive or wants to diffuse his agency with other actors in the story. This is evidenced in how he constructs his marriage story, where his friend and the prospective father-in-law were made responsible for the decision he made. This also illustrates the kind of masculinity enacted by sharing this story; again, males in the second attempt are the only agents who were active in the story;

whereas the female is passivized with no voice. This reminds us of Bamberg

(2004a), who illustrates how males tend to dominate the narrative as actors and

passivize the female in their narrative accounts. This story illustrates how Abdullah

does homosociality in his narrative, it is men story in which women are marginalized.

It also entails solidarity between the interlocutors whom all are exclusively males.

Having applied the first step of the analytic model, I move to apply the second step

by addressing the identities Abdullah wants to be seen to have when he tells this

story. Abdullah's diffusion of his agency and the way he enacts his masculine identity

seems to be facilitating his pious religious identity. This is evident in how he

constructs the *Walī*, whom he gives a very decisive role in both of his marriage

proposals, which consequently has led to passivizing the women's voice in his story.

Abdullah appears to be enacting a masculine identity by positioning the male actors

as the only agentive agents in the marriage process/proposals. It was as if to say, it

is a male business. Women, on the other hand, seem to be behind the scenes

waiting for men to make the decision over their marriage. Masculinity is central to the

idea of control, and it seems to be enabled by performing religiosity (the concept of

the *Walī*). This suggests that Abdullah wants to be seen as a pious Muslim who

would follow other Muslims by thinking about marriage; he would also adhere to the

concept of *Walī* in his marriage proposals. This is also evidenced in how he wants to

be seen as a speaker of classical Arabic. Classical Arabic is the most common

language used in religious institutions and religious practices. He only knew this

variety of Arabic at that time although it would be improper to use it in public. In fact,

his exchanges with his Arab friend were not in classical Arabic, as it seems that they

were using English. This enactment of his linguistic identity also indicates how he

wants to be seen as a pious religious Muslim who speaks the language of the Quran. In the next section, I briefly set out some concluding remarks on Abdullah's narrative.

8.8 Concluding remarks on Abdullah's narrative

Before concluding Abdullah story, I want to review the main findings from my analysis. As stated in the preceding analysis chapters, my aim is not to generalise about Abdullah. Rather, my aim has been to focus on the preferred representations of himself while narrating his story. It can be seen that Abdullah has recounted his conversion story by constructing characters and arranging them in space and time to construct positions for his story characters, generating a narrative knowledge that is prevalent to the evidences constructed in his story; which are the social events he has arranged to construct his story world. Du Bois (1986) expands upon the social nature of evidence as a social phenomenon that is constituted by the linguistic practices. These practices include the types of narrative and reported speech which are constituent to his agency projection in his story. This can be seen in his deliberate use of reported speech. Hill and Zepeda (1992) and Besnier (1992) argue that the narrators' implementation of other voices through the use of reported speech enable them to distribute responsibility of what is reported and consequently attributes agency to his/her characters in the story world. Abdullah's use of reported speech shows how he ascribes agencies to the constructed characters of his story. Especially at moments when he wants to distribute his responsibility of his narrative. This can be evidence in how he has constructed Abdulraziq who his agency emanates from deliberately reporting his voice in Abdullah narrative. Abdulraziq was convincing, suggesting and helping Abdullah to become Muslim. In all these events, he has been constructed as the agentive actor in Abdullah narrative account.

It is also worth mentioning at the end of the analysis that Abdullah has enacted religious piety by reiterating the normative gender roles in his marriage story. That is to say, he constructs his marriage story as a predominantly male affair (refer to section 8.7); men are the only agentive actors. Whereas, women, who are constituent to that marriage story, are largely erased. This informs us about the type of masculinity Abdullah has enacted in his story where manhood is to be in control: men decide and convince each other. This masculinity seems to be adhering to the concept of *Walī* (the male guardian). At this moment, it seems that Abdullah has been enacting his religious identity as pious Muslim as well as his masculine identity as Muslim man. Again, this is another example of how male solidarity has been constructed. This has been by doing homosociality, which stems from these moments of interaction between us, where women voice is excluded.

In addition, Abdullah constructs his conversion story with some level of continuity. He persistently presents himself as someone religious: he was brought up in a religious family; he was willing to go for the religious trips; he was trying to defend his belief when he encountered Abdulraziq; and he converted to Islam because he found the stories about the prophets and Jesus not to be contradictory, and the Islamic versions to be more plausible. These were positions he has enacted for himself all over his narrative where he constructs himself religious, which all feed into his enactments of his continuity. This suggests that Abdullah enacts some level of constancy over his story of change. That is to say, he continuously presents himself as a religious person who would accept change (conversion) in order to enact religious piety. These are the main points I want to dwell on before moving to the third step of the analytic model in which I examine what are the dominant discourses brought along by my informants.

Chapter 9: Discussion

9.1 Introduction

Having presented the converts' stories and applied the first two steps of the analytic

model in the four data analysis chapters, I now turn to the discussion, applying the

third step of the analytic model by examining which identities the converts portrayed

in their enactment of their preferred identities. In this chapter, I focus on the

enactment of master narratives about gender, religion and race, which are the areas

of focus in the present study. The following discussion does not suggest any

generalizations about Islamic converts in general, it rather tries to understand how

they make sense of these master narratives at the moments of telling or how these

master narratives are brought along in their enactments, accounting for their

variations and the attentivity of the context. It also does not suggest that these were

the only themes highlighted by the converts. Indeed, the analysis reveals further

identities relevant to social class, the converts' professional identity as language

teachers, their linguistic identities, and so on. I intend to focus on the themes of

gender, religion and race for a number of reasons. These themes are the driving

force behind the development of the research design and the theoretical framework

of my study. These themes have shaped most of my thinking about my research and

I feel they could be illustrative of the possibilities of applying the analytic model.

9.2 Gender and the enactment of (hyper) masculinity

Masculinity is integral to how the converts present themselves in my study, as I have demonstrated when applying the first two steps of the analysis, and in the semiotic framing in Section 4.5 Chapter 4. The converts engage with different discursive and corporeal practices in order to construct their sense of themselves as male. Before proceeding with the converts' construction of masculinity, I would like to emphasize that it is difficult to separate their masculine identity from their other identities which they portray in their narratives; it appears that masculinity as well as race, religion, social class, professional identity, and so on, interplay with each other in the construction of their conversion stories. However, this section aims to provide an understanding of how the converts construct their sense of themselves as male and how their construction inform what masculinity means to them.

Among my informants there is a pervasive heteronormative exploitation of masculinity regarding their deployment of gender and sex. Gender is subject to a male/female binary; in their narrative accounts, this binary appears to be a natural phenomenon that determines not only gender relations but also sex, which is deemed to naturally follow on from the female/male binary. There is a recurrent exploitation of gender by the converts, where men appear naturally as the responsible and dominant actors while women are the subjects of the male will (if not always compliant). This is also a determinant of the heterosexual view regarding gender, which has been constructed through their generic narratives where women typically are subservient to men; boys watch girls, chase them and have access to them and have the prerogative to touch girls' bodies. The converts construct a naturality in their heteronormative narrative, which does not just emphasize the

binary construction but configures the context of heteronormativity, where the men or the male story can thrive in a discursive and corporeal space- in accordance to the Saudi context, in which heteronormativity in gender and sexuality is the only possibility and is not under much threat. In their narratives, converts reconfigure a heteronormative exploitation of gender and sex, which follows patriarchal and religious structures that are specific to their story context. This accords with Coates (2003), Connell (2003), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) and Seidler (1996), who argue that masculinity is related to heteronormativity and reflects the social institutions which make masculinity appears stable and natural, despite its fluidity. Within a hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity permeates gender and sexuality, determining how the masculine 'subject' perceives not only gender relations and sexuality but, at some level, hegemonizes religiosity as a heteronormative enterprise.

Within their enactment of heteronormative practices of gender and sexuality, there appears to be an ongoing subordination of women, brought about through different means of constructing gender relations. Coates (2003) argues that in hegemonic masculinity, toughness and being authoritative over women are pivotal and recurrent features. This also aligns with Kiesling's (2007; 2005) exploitation of hegemonic masculinity, in which he argues (as stated earlier) that four cultural discourses are prevalent in what he calls hegemonic masculinity; these, it will be recalled, are gender differences, heterosexism, dominance, and male solidarity. Women are constructed differently in the converts' narratives. At some moments, they are the good women who follow the men; they are the good companions who men want to be with. Positioning them as good is relevant to their disposition of being a

housewife, which seems to be a typical patriarchal assignment of gender roles (Connell, 2003; Jablonka, 2022). Women are also referred to as sexual objects that are subject to the male gaze, touch and available for sexual adventures (Coates, 2003). Interestingly, references in the converts' narratives are mainly to 'girls' in relation to sexuality and desires and are positioned along with the bad world of drugs, sin and crime. For both good women and bad girls, most of the time, the female voice is erased and passivized in constructing them with what appears at times to be a hyper form of masculinity. Yet there are some moments where women appear agentive and able to act – predominantly within the secular world, where they acted inappropriately (from a religious perspective) and to whose gaze or desire the converts were subjected (such as Abdulrahim in Chapter 5, Section 5.6 and Jalal in Chapter 6, section 6.7). These agentive women characters are positioned within a 'bad' category of religious non-observance and sexual misconduct. In addition, another reference to authoritative women takes the form of mothers being concerned about their sons' lives after conversion. This reference to women, though constructed as lacking in knowledge, was presented as caring and within a 'good' category, which also resonates with a religious persona that the converts want to construct by having respect for their mothers. In a nutshell, the masculine construction of women in the converts' narrative is central to the passivization of the female voice and the emphasis on exploiting women's bodies as a space for men's religiosity and control. Women are also constructed in their talk in a way that suggests doing homosociality in exclusively male only interactions, which appears to help them enact male solidarity.

Subordinating women and passivizing their voice indicates that being in control is vital to how converts construct their masculinity. Control is the performative enactment of domination. It is the enactment of an agentive social subject who is immersed in different discourses; the male subjects dominate the doing as active social agents who discursively confirm, resist and possibly struggle within multiple discourses and oppressions. They dominate all other social agents and even resist non-masculine subjects having any agentic role (this can be seen in Jalal and Abdulrahim's resistance to the school owners). The man is the righteous actor, the executive agent, in the construction of a masculine subject. He is the one who controls touch (Jalal's story with his girlfriend); he is the one who sexually accesses or resists the girls as sexual objects (Abdulrahim and Steven), who decides on marriage (the construction of the *Walī* in Abdullah's case). In fact, the *Walī* (in one form or another) appears to be a pervasive narrative and recurrent among the converts; their marriages are always the men's business. It is always something between the converts and other men concerning their wives. Yet again, this is context specific; for those who married Arabs, the issue of marriage is totally a male prerogative. Men meet and decide upon marriage and women are behind the scenes (Abdulrahim and Abdullah). In the more western context, men have the advantage of networking with men and the female subject having some degree of agency (Steven's story and Abdullah's first proposal), yet men are still dominant in constructing the marriage story. The converts are enacting control with attention to the context in which the stories are positioned. They brought along all these dominant narratives of arranged marriage and *Walī* to present themselves as Muslims who follow the traditions in their marriages and the way they handle their

daily lives as men in control. It also illustrates how they enact male solidarity in the telling of these stories. This accords with Kiesling (2007; 2005).

Within this intensity of constructing a masculine identity, the converts performatively embody an intense masculine identity that does not only evoke religious piety, but rather incorporates the cultural locality of Bedouins (the Saudi context). This is evident through their style of dress (the converts follow the *Najd* Salafist dress), their beards and their bodily movement (Steven's story about the touching of the beard; Chapter 7, Section 7.7). The converts enact their identity through an interplay between corporeal embodiment and discursivity; the body and linguistic means are spaces for identity construction, where the converts brought about their preferred identities in which they draw on the available meanings and engage with multiple discourses. Although the present study does not include a detailed analysis of materiality, I nevertheless documented observations and reflections on the embodiment of the converts' identity (see Chapter 4, Section 4.5). In addition, within the cultural specificity of the interview context, the converts do not just draw on a pious Salafist identity, but rather emphasize what I would refer to as a masculine religiosity that only permits spaces for masculine exploitation of religion. From the converts' narratives and my reflexive thinking as a Salafist myself, Salafism appears to be, in many moments, a masculine interpretation of Islam. The right and the possibility to act and the monopoly of religious knowledge are dominated by the male voice and male agents within the Salafist narratives. In the next section, I intend to elaborate more on the construction of religious in the converts' narratives.

9.3 Enacting a pious religious identity

Converts' enactment of their religious identity intersects with various identities about themselves. As was the case with gender, it is difficult to separate religion from how they want to be seen as males, teachers and immigrants, and so forth. Nonetheless, I hope to clarify in this section how religion was performatively enacted as salient to their identities at specific moments in their narratives. I perceive these moments as windows to understand how they construct master narratives about religion. As cited above, masculinity is understood to reflect patriarchal and religious structures (Connell, 2003; Seidler, 1996). In their narrative accounts, I argue that religion appears to follow masculinity; what is religiously right is subject to the masculine domain of what is right, and masculine agents in the converts' narratives are mostly the active players in religiosity. There are some moments where mothers appeared active in the religious life of the converts in their early childhood and after conversion. Yet this is enacted within a domestic household, in which women are presented as responsible for the children at home, in a way that reflects the patriarchal exploitation of gender roles. In contrast, religion in its public sphere is a male enterprise; when converts engage with any religious agents in their accounts, they mostly bring in agentive males who are presented as having the prerogative for religious knowledge. This suggests that there is an ongoing hegemonizing of a masculine religiosity, which peak in the converts' construction of Salafism, or maybe Wahhabism as a specific version of Salafism. In reference to Assad's (2012) argument that Islamic tradition comprises sedimented social acts that are historical and appear Islamic at a specific moment of time, I would argue that the converts' construction of their pious religious identity is essentially a masculine endeavour. In

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many events recounted in their narratives, the converts construct their masculine identities through presenting themselves as religious. Thus, their sense of themselves as men is rooted in being Salafist and vice versa.

Moreover, as James (1902, [1974]) argues, religious conversion is a story of change and redefinition of the self. It is an enactment of an identity that persistently presents a transition in religious affiliation. However, there is a pervasive narrative of religious continuity in the story of change within conversion narratives. It is as if the conversion is, in some movements, a story about converting to continuity (Gervers and Bikhazi, 1990; Kose, 1996; Meyer, 1998; Nieuwkirk, 2014; Ozyurek, 2015; Winchester, 2015; Woodberry, 1992). Continuity, or constancy as Bamberg (2004a, 2008) puts it, is a representation of the converts before Islam with a broad association with religious practices that indicate continuity of being the same. Converts enact themselves as religious and participating in religious rituality, such as Jalal and Abdullah as altar boys, or Steven and Abdulrahim attending Sunday congregations. This seems to present a level of affiliation with religiosity that developed into being Muslim later in life. Becoming converts follows their commitment to Christianity and their upbringing as religious, or their dispositions as men with specific social positions, namely being of African descent (or being African in the case of Abdullah). This reiterates the Islamic tradition whereby Islam follows Christianity and is a redemption of its message. This is a pervasive narrative among the converts, which is recurrent in the literature cited above. In addition, continuity is enacted within the converts' dispositions; it was their way of thinking that fuelled their religious theological inquiry and questioning of Christianity, which led them to become Muslim (Steven's religious question, which is also found with Abdullah and

Jalal). These characteristic traits brought about by the converts that fit being Muslim indicate continuity. It is also reflected in the converts' preference to be called a revert over convert (reported by Jalal and Steven), which presents how they see themselves as Muslim in nature. This is reminiscent of the Islamic tradition of *Fṭrh*, which refers to the innate state of humans as born submitting to the will of *Allāh*, and that their 'upbringing turns them to be non'.

Enacting *Fṭrh* is followed by a persistent presentation of a submissive persona to *Allāh*'s will. This submissive self is always rewarded; it is gifted and blessed with the help of the Almighty to overcome different types of struggles that were included in the converts' life trajectories from jobs (Abdulrahim, Jalal and Abdullah) to marriage (Abdullah and Abdulrahim). There is a persistent presentation of the converts as being rewarded. In this construct, there is the enactment of brotherhood or Muslim brothers, who are always there supporting and to whom the converts diffuse agency in their narrative; they built a collective voice with them and endured the struggle for a religious space in what seems to be a more non-religious or secular world (this can be evidenced in Abdulrahim's story referring to the things he did not like in Egypt, or in Steven's change after he left to the capital). This shared struggle includes striving for a greater ability to construct a public sphere that matches their religious piety, or more precisely their embodiment of their new religiously endorsed masculinity. This suggests that they presented themselves as belonging to the transnational brotherhood of Muslims. That belonging is a divine reward that reconciles their struggle following their loss of a social life after conversion (this was obvious in Abdullah's story with Abdy and the other Muslim brothers after moving to Saudi Arabia; it is also evident in Abdulrahim's story with the supporting brothers in Egypt,

and Jalal's story of no longer being able to celebrate Christmas with his family). Yet

again, their construction brings another struggle to their existence as foreigners in

Arab countries. They face various difficult immigration policies that put barriers

against their ability to live and work in these countries. This can be seen in the

struggle they all faced with the contract policy for foreigners in Saudi Arabia. This

struggle constrains their chances for continuity with their *Hijrat* (religiously motivated

migration), which is also a pervasive construct with various levels of religious

endorsement among the converts. Accordingly, it has connotations with religiosity

and the search for a space to practise their religious piety for both of the American

converts, especially in Abdulrahim's case. On the other hand, it has connotations of

work and professional opportunities for the British converts. This shows the diversity

in the converts' experiences and the specificity of the conversion story to its context

and how it is constructed to build both transnational and local identities.

Moreover, as the converts engage in enacting their religious identity, they position

English and Arabic in different ways when it came to the roles they play in their

religious rituality. Interestingly, English assumed an expanded role among converts

as a liturgical language. It has been used not only in their societal, but also within

their religious practices, such as attending classes and reading the Quran. This

accords with Jaspal and Coyle (2010), who report that there is a shifting role in

liturgical language within Islam and that English is emerging as a legitimate language

for Islamic rituality. Arabic seems to be pivotal to how the converts constructed their

religious piety. Their presentation of themselves as language learners, their

mastering of classical Arabic (especially Jalal and Abdullah) and their upbringing of

their children as Arabic speakers is relevant to their enactment of their religious identity. Arabic is a language that is important for their *Dīn*, as Abdulrahim stated.

As can be seen from the above, the converts engage with various discourses in their construction of religious identity, within which there is also an ongoing embodiment of a pious religiosity. This can be illustrated in the semiotic framing in Section 4.5 in Chapter 4, showing that converts' performative embodiment of their religious piety through the stylization of their bodies with a dress code, beard, naming and attempts to fit in within the available spaces in which they are situated. The body, or the corporeal space, as well as discursive ones are inhabited by the converts to present their sense of religious piety. The embodied religious piety is also a cause of their struggle for a space. This is relevant to Abdulrahim's story with the Christian school owner in Egypt and Steven's change after moving to work for the British Council. At the same time, it is a privilege that enabled the converts to present themselves as legitimate English language teachers (Steven's story with the touching of the beard). These events in which their embodiment of their religious identity is a source of struggle or privilege are also moments in which they enact their identities as English language teachers and immigrants. They are moments of intersection between different self-representations where differences and sameness were enacted, two pivotal concepts to the exploration of identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004).

Another important theme regarding how the converts enact their religious identity is their sense of themselves as black; having an African background in a western context affected how the converts enacted their religious identity. While there appear to be an initial racialization of Islam in the converts' stories regarding their early Islamic encounters, these racial connotations are erased from Islam when they left

their home countries; this is especially evident in Abdulrahim and Jalal's stories, but also to a lesser degree in Steven's story. I aim to elaborate on their enactment of their racial identity in the next section.

9.4 Race and racialization of Islam

Race appears to be key to how the converts from the United States construct their narratives, whereas it is indexed to a lesser extent by the British converts. In the case of the former race is a trope; that is a social interpretation of socially stabilised biological differences, which is produced by socio-political norms, in which race emerges as a dividing line that allocates difference and sameness (Alexander, 2004; Thompson, 2003). Race is crucial for the African-American converts in how they enact their experiences before their conversion to Islam; spaces, sameness and differences are constructed in a way that resonated with their sense of being black. Spaces like the projects for Abdulrahim and the neighbourhood for Jalal were constructed as inhabited by Black People in a way that ascribed boundaries of an in-group with whom the American converts constructed a sense of belonging. The black communities of the United States had shared struggles against the racist oppression of Americans of African descent. This struggle is enacted through racializing poverty and the spaces in which it is concentrated; this varied in intensity among the converts in their sense of belonging. blackness appeared to be more salient for Abdulrahim, which is evident in his indexing of race early in his narrative orientation, while it came later in the narrative of Jalal, who appears to have come from a more well-off family. For both, the sense of black struggle and oppression within the racial discourses and practices of the United States peaks in their early encounters with Islam. It can be seen in Abdulrahim's account when he reports the

experience of being a black man in a white man's world; it is also evident in Jalal's experience of coming out as a Muslim to his mother, and her comment that he is 'already black'. The two converts vary in how they claimed responsibility for knowledge of the statements of black struggle; Abdulrahim appear to be more agentive in his statements than Jalal, who diffuses his responsibility by reporting his mother's statement. However, this still illustrates the relevance of race to the conversion narratives. The converts' construction of racial struggle also confirms the domination of masculinity over their narratives. This is evident in Abdulrahim's statement about being a black man in a white man's world. Here the reference to man appears to show a heteronormative and masculine construction of the struggle, which accords with Crenshaw (1988), who argues that there is a hegemonic exploitation of racism in the United States that subordinates black women. What this brings along is not just that sense of blackness, but an ideal of the black man in the United States' context. This will be shown later in this section.

Race also is referenced in the converts' early encounters with Islam, when they racialized Islam as they came to first know about it through reading or learning about the Nation of Islam – a sect that exploits Islam as the prerogative of Black People. This accords with Gaonnier, (2015) and Simmons (2006), who report that Islam is racialized in the context of the United States as associated with the emblematic struggle of the African-American search for dignity. This is enacted in the American converts' narratives by referencing the prominent figure Malcolm X as an attractive character whose biography drew them to learn about Islam. Yet again, the converts in the present study vary in their attitudes and indexing of race in their stories; this seems to be recurrent among the Americans with particular salience for Abdulrahim,

whereas for the British, Steven has just reported that he first read about the Nation of Islam and rejected what they were about – he only read about them because they are brothers of African descent, while race did not feature in Abdullah's story. This variation in the indexing of race shows the complexity and diversity of the converts' narratives. Converts bring up what is salient to them: the meaningful discourses that enable them to be seen in their preferred way. Therefore, the Americans' sense of being black is salient to their construction of their conversion stories while in their homeland, which reflects the intensity of racism and racial discourses in the United States. Islam is constructed as empowering against racism and as emancipating African-Americans.

The construction of race in the converts' narratives becomes less significant or obvious after their conversion to Islam. They seem to erase race from their enactment; the struggle of being of African descent was relevant to their existence in America. Their later struggle concerned being foreigners in their host countries. This shows the complexity of the converts' identity which stemmed from the construction of multiple senses of belonging: first their belonging to the Muslim brotherhood and to the wider Muslim world, which appear to be transnational; and then their belonging to different nationality, which is also something that indicates their difference or 'otherness' as not enabling them to fully fit into the host communities. Their struggle as transnationals stemmed from their enactment of differences within the Muslim brotherhood construct, which is presented as race neutral by Abdulrahim and Jalal. However, there is a moment that suggests otherwise, which was when Abdullah shared what appeared to be a racial story when he proposed to the Somali woman (Chapter 8, section 8.7). Abdullah, unlike the other three converts, does not index race significantly in his conversion story. This might be linked to his background as a

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migrant from Zimbabwe or suggest that race is more relevant to the American and the Caribbean contexts with their long history of slavery and racism.

The American converts construct their conversion in a way that resonates with the biography of Malcolm X. For both converts, constructing a conversion story is relevant to racism and their struggle as African-Americans in the United States. Islam appears to be the end point that would emancipate them and empower them to overcome their difficult experience with racism. This reminds us of Jones (2020) who argues that Malcolm X not only represents the black Muslim man's story, but also represents an ideal of black manhood in the American context in which Islam is the ideal end point for empowerment. This appears to be integral to being a black man in the American context (Alexander, 2004), That is to say, being black is a way of life, and fitting into it necessitates a particular engagement with what appears to be integral to being black. This is evident in how converts construct themselves as engaged with the black struggles in America and even in how they enact their masculinity and religiosity. The ideal of Malcolm X is more conspicuous for Abdulrahim than Jalal. It was pivotal for Abdulrahim, who precedes his conversion story with a story about Islam and the African-American struggle with racism and his participation in activism related to their struggle. Abdulrahim presents his life by discussing his struggle with poverty and his teenage years marked by toughness and sexual adventures; this is followed by his need to wash away his sins later in his adulthood. In turn came his search for the dignity of Black People; he then brings up Malcolm X and his influence on his life, presenting Islam as a form of emancipation from racism. This biographical pattern suggests that a meta narrative which Abdulrahim, and with less visibility Jalal, exploits to plot his conversion experience as influenced by Malcolm X's conversion story. The story here is not just recounting a

past experience of religious change, but an ongoing presentation of the converts' preferred identities that has great relevance to their present. In the concluding chapter, I elaborate on this and on the performative construction of the conversion stories.

9.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the results of the four data analysis chapters. This involves applying the last step of the analytic model, which addresses the question of what dominant identities the converts brought along in their constructs. The analysis focuses on three dominant identities: gender, religion and race. The converts' narratives are not exclusive to these three themes. However, these are the ones that I focus on in my study while emphasizing that there are other identities that are salient to the converts; however, for reasons of practicality and economy within this PhD thesis, I opted to focus on these three themes. Yet the model of analysis opens up the possibility to expand the focus to other identities that were not within the scope of the analysis. In the next chapter, I want to argue that the conversion stories are meaningful stories not only with reference to the converts' past experiences, but also with relevance to the present and the context at the moment of telling. This is illustrated more in the next chapter, which is the conclusion of the thesis.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have addressed the question of what can be learned from the findings of the first two steps of the analytic model in relation to the master narratives that are brought along in the converts' narrative, which is the third step. As previously demonstrated, my research investigates the narratives of African-American and Black British Islamic converts in the context of Saudi Arabia. It expands on existing narrative analysis and positioning theory literature by emphasizing the performative perspective of narrative identity. It is also intended to bring the performative construction aspect of the conversion experience to the attention of religious conversion studies. In this chapter, I summarize the current study's findings. Then I discuss the research's limitations and contribution to knowledge. Finally, I conclude with a personal remark about my research.

10.2 Summary of the findings

My study is designed to investigate the narratives of African-Americans and Black British Islamic converts. It aims to explore how they construct their narratives within the specificity of the Saudi context, where masculinity emerges as a salient feature for how they construct their conversion story. The study adopts an ethnographically informed narrative research and develops an analytic model where linguistic analysis is informed by various traditions, from discourse analysis to sociolinguistics and

linguistic anthropology. The findings of the study bring new insights to positioning analysis research and contribute to the study of religious conversion by introducing a linguistically informed method (see Section 4.4.3.2 Chapter 4). The methods of analysis are driven by the following research questions:

1. How are these male converts' experiences performatively enacted within the context of life story research interviews in the K.S.A.?
2. What are the commonalities and differences that performatively emerge in their stories?
3. What does this reveal about the complexity of male Islamic converts' experiences, particularly with regard to gender, race and religion, that are invoked by their narratives?

In the following sections, I intend to respond to these research questions by referring to the output of my analysis, which is presented in Chapters 5 to 9.

10.2.1 The performative enactment of the converts' narratives

This section aims to address the first research question, 'How are these male converts' experiences performatively enacted within the context of life story research interviews in the K.S.A.? This question is addressed by applying the data analytic model in the data analysis and discussion chapters. In these chapters, I aimed to examine how the converts performatively enact their narratives and made sense of themselves and the world around them. The analytic model adopted in the present study attempts to provide in-depth scrutiny of how the converts agentively construct a story world that made them appear with a preferred kind of self-identification, one

that not only enables them to culturally fit in as Muslims, but also reflects the complexity of their narrative construction. This complexity stems from an interplay between what is available to them interactionally and their agentive engagement in constructing their preferred identities through various discursive and corporeal spaces.

In the four analysis chapters, I demonstrate how the converts enacted their preferred identities through the stories they introduced in their narratives. Lindgren (2004) contends that in order to construct an Islamic convert identity in a postmodern society, converts bring in events from their lives and make them appear coherent. Accordingly, researchers can gain insight into the construction of the converts' sense of who they are by scrutinising the linguistic practises that constitute the narratives and their context; this is enacted every time the story is retold in potentially dissimilar patterns (Stromberg, 1993). These linguistic practices are constitutive of the story as evidence (Du Bois, 1986). In the present study, converts persistently use reported speech to diffuse their agency and project a collective voice for responsibility of knowledge. This is recurrent at moments where they construct themselves as less agentive. Also, pronominal choices and narrative types (generic and personal narrative) rhetorically contribute to the agency of themselves and their characters in their stories. Yet, again, the ability to act also stems from other linguistic practices that pervasively featured in their accounts, especially in their use of modality and the construction of argument structure in their utterances, in which they persistently position men's voices as agents and women's as patients. Positions and stances are also constructed and adopted, in which the converts again use various evaluative elements (e.g., intensifiers). These practices illustrate the converts' position in relation to the circumstances they construct in their narratives. All these practices,

along with other linguistic means in the converts' narratives, are used to develop the converts' sense of themselves and their sense of belonging. I understand these acts as signs that have been saturated with social meaning through their ongoing recitation and reiteration in discursive events. These signs are complex, involving an interplay between their sedimented historical meaning and their linguistic structure in saturating their present social use when they are recited and reiterated on repeated occasions.

These linguistic acts in the converts' stories are not the only space for the enactment of their preferred identity and story world; the converts also recite and reiterate, indeed embody, hexis (bodily acts) that also construct their pious religious Salafism with masculinity at its core. The converts performatively style their appearance to present themselves with the kind of personhood they want to be seen with; their beards, bodily movement (the beard story in Steven) and their dress code all are invested in by converts to reiterate a pervasive Salafist stylization that sometimes fits in with the Saudi context. In a nutshell, the discursive and corporeal spaces are performatively inhabited by the converts to enact their preferred identities at the moment of interaction.

These performative acts are the means through which the conversion narratives are brought about. Therefore, I would argue that conversion is a category that is performatively enacted continuously, in which converts present themselves with identities that are relevant to how they want to be seen in the present. In their conversion narratives, the converts draw on various discourses to construct the kind of personhood they wish to present. Nieuwkirk (2016) argues that conversion is 'not only a momentary experience but an ongoing process of religious, social, and cultural transformation' (p.2). In the present study, the conversion narrative is a

discursive and corporeal space in which the converts enact dominant forms of manhood, religious piety, racial identity, and so on. Their narratives form discursive spaces that are inhabited by the converts, in which they position their characters in accordance to how they want to be seen at the moment of telling. Therefore, I argue that researchers, especially in religious studies, should be cautious about understanding of a modelled converts' psyche (Gooren, 2007; Kose, 1996; Rambo, 1999). Instead, narratives should be taken as means of identity construction that are meaningful to discursive purposes for the present as well as the past. Converts agentively brought about (Baynham, 2014) preferred identities to present themselves as Muslims, teachers, immigrants, black, strugglers, etc.; these identities are crucial to how they want to be seen at the moment of telling. It is their intention to narrate what appear to be a meaningful life trajectory story which seeks to construct a story of religious change, in which meanings are brought in and identities are enacted not just to present a past experience of religious shift, but rather to enact identities that reconcile the present and possibly the future. When constructing their narratives, the variation in their agency, the responsibility for knowledge and the events selected are all integral to the contextual identities they want to interactionally enact in accordance with their sense of themselves and their reading of the interview context. These preferred identities brought along master narratives (Bamberg, 2004a) about gender, religion and race at the moment of telling in interactional settings. Through their preferred identities, the converts seek to be intelligible as Muslims, males, English speakers, black and so forth.

The notion of fitting in is key in their development of dominant identities – the master narrative or dominant discourses, which they construct by conforming with, resisting or subverting the regulatory frames in what appear to be hyper-masculine settings

and in the racist discourse of teacher recruitment in Saudi institutions. They strive to enact culturally intelligible identities (Butler, 1990) that match their reading of the interview context, which is reciprocally a key constituent of their narratives. Therefore, by enacting their preferred identities, they enact a pervasive master narrative of a heteronormative masculine world that dominates their religious interpretations. In enacting all these identities, the four converts reveal commonalities and differences. This will be addressed in my response to the second research question in the next section.

10.2.2 The emerging commonalities and differences among converts

The second research question aims to understand the commonalities and differences that performatively emerge in the converts' narratives. The question is 'What are the commonalities and differences that performatively emerge in their stories?' To answer this research question, I revisit the second and the third steps of the analytic model, which are implemented in the data analysis and discussion chapters. Commonalities and differences emerge in the converts' narratives in the performative acts they draw on and their enacted positions. However, in addressing this second research question, I concentrate on the positions rather than the acts as I feel that the acts have been covered in my response to the first question. Although the converts are in a position to enact a story of change in their religious affiliation, there is a recurrent emphasis on self-continuity in their stories of change. The converts persistently present themselves with identities in their lives before they became Muslims that match those found in their religious journey, thus demonstrating continuity and coherence which accords with Meyer (1998) and Winchester (2015) who argue that conversion is at some moments an enactment of

converting to continuity. This can be seen at different moments in their narratives, which I illustrate by providing some examples from the analysis. For Abdulrahim and Jalal, race stories and their search for dignity for African-Americans seem to continually feature in their stories about their religious conversion. Their struggle against racism in the United States is pivotal to their religious change; they appear to present themselves with a continuous strong sense of being black men in their narrative constructs; this is especially the case for Abdulrahim. This continuous presentation of being black is relevant to their religiosity before Islam and salient to their encounter with their new faith. This is evident in the importance and influence of Malcolm X in their conversion.

Religiosity and religious commitment are also recurrent themes before and after the point of conversion. All four participants in the present study present themselves as religious and committed to religion from a very young age. This is demonstrated in Jalal and Abdullah's stories about being altar boys, while all four participants regularly participated in religious activities. Enacting continuity by presenting themselves as religious before conversion suggests that it is not a sudden event; instead, it is a natural end point of their theological and social lives. Their religious change is an expected outcome of the way they lived and the views they held. Islam here gives coherence to their lives and although they initially affiliated with a different faith, their sense of manhood and the way they thought and carried themselves were in alignment with Islam; these characteristics are strongly and consistently bound to their dispositions.

Masculinity is central to their characters that they continuously enacted within their stories. Their conversion stories are not just about religious change but are also stories of a male world and male domination, which are integral features of their

narratives before and after their conversion to Islam. This masculine identity is a recurrent theme that performatively emerges among the converts. Masculinity is a crucial construct in the converts' accounts and contributes to their construction of continuity. In their lives before and after Islam, presenting masculine selves is pertinent to how the converts want to be seen. Masculinity even dominates the conversion story itself and how they interpret and recount their life trajectories. The converts appear to construct their conversion and religiosity as following masculinity. This can be seen in how agency is ascribed to male agents and knowledge is men's prerogative. In different events recounted in the converts' narratives, the male voice is central in marriage, religious knowledge, activism and struggle. This appears to be a common masculine narrative which resonates with Bamberg (2004a), Coates (2003), Connell (2003) and Kiesling (2007; 2005). In addition, their enactment of men's talk is recurrent, in which they construct male solidarity through stabilizing their masculine sense of the world in discursive moments where they exercise their male prerogative in terms of erasing women's voices and thereby marginalizing them. This can be seen in Abdulrahim's story about his wife's English, Jalal's looking for a virgin, Steven's story about wanting to get married at an early age and Abdullah's proposal of marriage. In all of these instances, they engage in homosociality, allowing them to enact male solidarity (Kiesling, 2005).

Their narrative accounts suggest that the converts construct a religious identity where religiosity, especially Islamic Salafism, is based on men's interpretation of what appears to be Islamic. Religious knowledge and the way of life and presenting as religious is central to the men's interpretation of good and bad. This masculine religiosity brings with it a recurrent heteronormative construct. The converts performatively construct gender and sexuality heteronormatively and present it as

natural. The men's domination and subordination of any women's voice and presenting women's bodies as subject to male desire and gaze illustrate the hetero-norms that regulate the converts' sense of who they are.

The heteronormative masculine and self-continuity are recurrent traits in the converts' narratives where commonalities emerge and constitute repeated stories that are not identical. Indeed, the converts vary in the degree of intensity of these salient traits, which can also be seen in how race is brought in their narrative. Abdulrahim and Jalal present themselves with a very strong sense of being black. Their construction of themselves as African-Americans is integral to their lives in America and is pertinent to their conversion; they construct Islam as not only crucial to their religious journey, but also for their empowerment and emancipation against racism in the USA. They align with and reiterate the life trajectory of Malcolm X, who is pertinent to their narratives and who presented an ideal of manhood as African-Americans (Jones 2020). On the other hand, race is less important in Steven and Abdullah's stories and rarely feature in their constructs. This difference suggests that race is more salient for the American converts, but less pertinent for Steven, a British convert with Caribbean ancestors, and absent completely for the Zambian British convert.

The converts' indexing of race highlights another difference, which is how they present their conversion trajectories. Again, the Americans present themselves as permanent immigrants from America who are doing *Hijrat.* In contrast, the British converts seem to present themselves as expatriates who came to Saudi Arabia for various reasons, such for employment purposes or following a friend. Moreover, the converts vary, as discussed above, in the extent to which they subscribe to hyper masculinity and the intensity with which they experienced race and struggle. In this

regard, I find that while Abdulrahim and Jalal enact a toxic masculinity, particularly in

Abdulrahim's maintenance (and delight in) his wife's English. It is also evident in

Jalal's campus inquiries about who was and who was not a virgin, which betrays a

view of women as either damaged or undamaged goods – in which their personhood

is secondary. Masculinity in Steven's narrative is less intense than those of both

Americans. In contrast also, Abdullah portrays a softer masculine identity. At the

same time, accounting for the fact that Abdulrahim came from a very deprived

background while the other converts appear to construct themselves as financially

stable suggests that differences in the converts' social class are pertinent to their

construction of their life experience. This also suggests the complexity of the

converts' narratives, which I address in my response to the third research question.

10.2.3 The complexity of the converts' narratives

The last research question addresses the complexity of the converts' narratives;

'what does this reveal about the complexity of male Islamic converts' experiences,

particularly with regard to gender, race and religion, that are invoked by their

narratives?' This question concludes the empirical inquiry of my exploration of the

converts' stories. Up to this point in my analysis, I have been focusing on gender,

religion and race in analysing the converts' conversion stories. However, the analytic

model reveals complex constructs that cannot be reduced solely to my topics of

interest. The converts draw on various discourses to construct events relevant to the

three themes mentioned above. Their constructs also include other discourses that

are relevant to the identities they claim. They introduce master narratives about

English native speakerism, which can be seen in Abdullah and Steven's stories; this

construct of native speakerism also intersects with their construction of their

professional identities as language teachers. Their narratives also index social class and how it intersects with other discourses they draw on in constructing their accounts of struggle.

These discourses are invoked by a story that is co-constructed and designed to be relevant to gender, religion and race. However, the converts introduce and insert themselves into other discourses, which they use to bring about a sense of struggle at being foreigners and from the hiring practices surrounding teacher recruitment in the host countries. I find that this also invokes a complex sense of belonging in which they enact different positions and persistently align with what they refer to as 'brothers'. This group is brought into the converts' narratives as a complex construct who struggles for a shared space in the promised land of Muslims, which Saudi Arabia is imagined as constituting, as in the biography of figures like Malcolm X. The 'brothers' are constructed in the converts' narratives as a transnational community of Muslims whose sense of belonging to Islam reconciles their geographical and national differences. The converts appear to have no shared space for belonging to the brotherhood except in their sense of belonging, that is revealed in their religiosity, which emerges in their narratives. The converts' sense of belonging to the group is not enough to equip them, along with the other brothers, with a status of not being foreigners; here the 'foreigners' is a secular category of the world of nation states as opposed to the *Ummah* (in which there is only the community of believers). This can be seen in Abdulrahim's story of when he first arrived in Egypt (section 5.6, Chapter 5), which is repeated in the other converts' struggle for contract renewal in Saudi Arabia; this is evidence of their struggle for space, where their situation becomes poignant. On the other hand, it appears that there is an enactment of an international bond linking Muslim brothers regardless of

the secular geographical space, a bond that would tolerate their different geographical origins; this bond is based on their search for the true land of Muslims. This imagined land collides with the temporal social realms of modernity and what follows it (postmodernity), where religion is in an ongoing quarrel with the secular (Habermas, 2010). Except for their sense of belonging, which is revealed in their religiosity and emerges in their narratives, the converts appear to have no physical shared space for belonging to the brotherhood. This reminds us of Steiner (1985), who argues that the sacred belonging of Jews is based on their religious text, their diaspora, and the imagined belonging to what is claimed to be a promised land for the sacred community. To Steiner, the sacred text (Torah) is the only homeland for Jews. Aligning with Steiner, I argue that the converts' sense of belonging appears to 'eradicate the deeper truth of unhousedness, of an at-homeness in the word, which are (sic) the legacy of the prophets' (Steiner, 1985: p.24); that unhousedness paves the way for the converts' belonging to a group (brothers of Islam) of cross-national and cross-ethnic individuals, in which the bond between them is fuelled by their religious affiliation. The converts' struggle in fitting into the host society is reconciled through their belonging to the brothers of Islam, who have no homeland except in the converts' narratives.

10.3 The limitations of the study

Like any research in the social sciences, the present study has limitations that should be acknowledged. There is a limitation in the research design; the present study relies on autobiographical data elicited through life storytelling interviews. The interview was designed in accordance with my interests, which have driven most of the research processes in my study. My interests come from my experience of

working and socially engaging with some of the participants before starting the research as well as through engagement with the existing social science literature about religious conversion. However, a more in-depth documentation of the converts in their daily lives would bring a richer perspective to their identity work in interaction, which was not the focus of the present study. Claims made about the converts' identities are mainly subject to their narratives and to the interactional work at the moments of telling their stories. Having a thicker documentation of their social interactions with Saudis would supplement the claims made about their identities in the narratives, providing richer insights. This can be taken as a point to explore in future investigations.

Another limitation in the study is the fact that it falls into what Habermas (2010) refers to as the subordination of religiosity in conducting a treatise that is developed within secular knowledge. In my inquiry on the converts' narratives, I find myself in the position of disparaging their religiosity (including that of myself) and instead prioritizing what is integral to the secular. At many moments, I found myself including what is relevant to my research interests and marginalizing what might be more meaningful to their religious trajectories. Focusing on gender, religion and race as constructs that are pivotal to researching identity in secular research could leave less space for wider consideration of the religious meanings of their conversion.

10.4 The contribution of the study

The present study contributes to the existing literature in the social sciences in different ways. My investigation will attract the attention of researchers at western institutions, who are interested in social phenomena centred on language (such as sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists and applied linguists). This population under

investigation in this thesis is rarely considered in western institutions that are entangled with other global issues relevant to the western context. I find that there is a lack of research in the existing literature on Islamic religious conversion within fields affiliated with linguistics. Other contributions of the present study can be seen in two areas that are related to the theory of narrative analysis and positioning, which is illustrated in the following.

10.4.1 Contribution to narrative analysis and positioning theory

The present study builds on existing literature that adopts a performative perspective towards narrative analysis, especially works that take a linguistic approach (Bamberg, 2004a; Baynham, 2014; Speer and Potter, 2002), and it contributes to this literature in different ways. First, the present study adds to the existing empirical work that seeks to take a performative perspective on sociolinguistics - more particularly, Baynham's (2015) work on **performative sociolinguistics** by providing empirical evidence for the Butlerian notion of performativity actually taking place in interaction during the interviews. Second, it contributes to the exploration of narrative identity as it is performatively brought about by providing a detailed account of the linguistic. The existing literature of narrative analysis emphasizes researching narratives (Speer and Potter, 2002) and adopting positioning theory (Bamberg, 2004a; Baynham, 2014) by focusing on linguistic analysis. I argue here that the present study provides a more in-depth linguistic analysis by providing an inventory that focuses on some linguistic practices which are charged with subject agency, narrativity and stance taking, and its account of the ethnographic data to supplement the analysis of the discursive. The analytic model is designed to provide a detailed account of identity work in interaction while constructing narratives. This has been

achieved by drawing on insights from existing literature within sociolinguistics linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis (De Fina, 1995, 2003; Du Bois, 2007; Duranti, 1994; Hill and Irvine, 1992; Hill and Zepeda, 1992; Narrog, 2012), which I argue helps to understand how linguistic structures are charged with social meaning (Du Bois, 1986).

Another contribution to the narrative analysis is the fact that the model also provides a synthesis of discursive analysis and corporeal acts or embodiment, which is central to the theory of performativity. Although the analysis is widely informed by discursive methods, it still accounts for the corporeal aspect while unpacking the meanings from the converts' stories. The supplementary ethnographic data presented in Section 4.5 Chapter 4 is referred to when the third step of the analytic model is carried out. This is to better understand how the converts performatively enacted their sense of themselves and the world.

10.4.2 Contribution to research on religious conversion

The present study also contributes to the existing literature on religious conversion and the anthropology of religion as it provides a detailed analytic model that will help researchers to unpack conversion experiences. Conversion experiences are mainly studied through biographical data (Lindgren, 2004; Nieuwkirk, 2014; Rambo, 1999; Stromberg, 2014), and research on religious conversion rarely adopts a linguistically informed narrative method (Stromberg, 2014). The model in the present study explores the converts' narratives by drawing on insights from the existing literature on positioning theory and linguistic analysis to unpack how the converts enact their conversion experience. It fills the gap in religious studies raised by Stromberg (2014), who argues for a holistic narrative analytic method that could explore the

conversion experience, accounting for its discursive traits. I argue that the analytic model in the present study provides such a lens. It also emphasizes a bottom up perspective towards investigating religious construction, highlighting the need to explore religious conversion in relation to how it occurs.

10.5 Concluding statement

When I started considering the conversion phenomenon as a potential research project, I examined existing literature on researching masculinity, religion and race within the social sciences in western traditions. These research traditions have evolved at a distance from spirituality and emphasized a different secular way of thinking. However, as my reading built up, I developed a complex relationship with my data, which has caused me to struggle a lot during the process of data analysis and discussion. I started to feel that my research only highlighted parts that were tangibly related to my research interests. It elicited stories that are pivotal to the postmodern inquiry, where gender, religion and traditional institutions are all questioned. Yet, this excludes the complex scene of the other, non-western, way of thinking. I feel that I have lost myself at times within the research processes in the present study; it is as if I have been trapped in the status quo of contemporary scientific research.

My sense of myself and my informants as believers appears to have been undermined in favour of what matters for the investigation. Whenever I have to become entangled with the data, I feel that I have to suppress all my attachment to the spirituality of the journey and to think instead about the delusion of socially constructed norms that we strive at some moments to take as facts. Yes, toxic masculinity is raised that may bother many people who cannot bear to encounter it. I

find it difficult myself. But behind this, the converts are also struggling for a place where they want to live; there is also a religious journey that means a lot to them and to me.

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Institute of Education

The Title of the Study: The narratives of Male Anglophone Muslim converts
Department: Culture Communication and Media
Centre of Applied Linguistics:
The Researchers Name: Ibrahim Alkhateeb

Dear _____,

You are being invited to take part in a research project that I am doing for the completion of my PhD degree. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research us being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me if you wish.

Please feel free to Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this

The present study tries to explore the religious and linguistic identities of Anglophone converts to Islam. It tries to understand the complexity of Convert experience, particularly the

under-researched area of expatriate Convert experience in Saudi Arabia. I'm interested particularly in the way in which Convert male talk about their experience of being Muslim particularly in Saudi Arabia, how their conversion has influenced their linguistic repertoire, and ways in which other aspects of their lives impact on their experience of being Expatriate Muslim in K.S.A. Your participation will enable those interested in Language and Religious identity to learn more about male convert's experience.

If you wish to take part I would like to assure you of a number of things:

• Your involvement is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any stage without giving me a reason;

• You will not be identified in any way in the project – you will be referred to only by the pseudonym. Similarly, there will be no references to any town or city in Saudi Arabia or the country of origin in the project – places will be referred to by a letter of the alphabet as follows: A (a Saudi city); B (a British Town town), etc.;

• During the interview, I will be happy if you wish to share me any pictures of your life that you think my be relevant to the topics you will talk about.

• In the Last interview, I wish to share some pictures with you and I wish you to comment on them. These pictures will not of some cultural iconic and will not be addressing any sensitive issues.

• The interviews will be audio-recorded and recordings transferred to a password secure computer to which only I have access. After transfer the recordings will be erased from the audio-recorder;

• The interviews will be transcribed by me and kept on a password secure computer to which only I have access;

• Should you withdraw at any stage from the project and request the erasure of all recordings I will erase all the recorded interviews and I will make no use of them; similarly, all transcribed data will be deleted and I will make no use of them;

• You are under no obligation to answer any question I ask and are at complete liberty to terminate any interview when you wish without offering me a reason.

If these guarantees meet with your satisfaction and you are willing to take part, please complete the consent form below. Best wishes,

Ibrahim Alkhateeb | PhD Student |
UCL Institute of Education
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Email: i.alkhateeb@ucl.ac.uk

Institute of Education

The narratives of Male Anglophone Muslim converts in Saudi Arabia

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in this study, please complete this consent form and

return to Ibrahim Alkhateeb in person or at the address below.   Yes   No

☐ ☐

I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research.

I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not   ☐ ☐

be attributed to me.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, and that if I   ☐ ☐

choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.

I am happy for Ibrahim to audio-record the interviews

☐ ☐

 I understand that I will not be identified by name in the project.   .

☐ ☐

 I understand that no places associated with me will be identified by name in the project.   .

☐ ☐

I understand that the results will be shared in research publications and/or presentations.

☐ ☐

I understand that Ibrahim will keep the recordings and transcriptions of the interviews on a password secure computer to which only he has access.

☐ ☐

Name _____Signed _____

Date _____

Ibrahim Alkhateeb | PhD Student |

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Appendix 3

Table 25 Abdulrahim First Interview

AB I am American I was born in the projects if you ever heard of projects?

I No.

AB projects is typically is the place where all the poor people live /laugh/ in America they give them free housing ok but it is not the best housing and they sort of concentrated mostly Black People and some Latinos into this into these different areas in New York, in Chicago, all over the United States so I grow up in a place like this typically these types of places there is a lot of … drugs, crimes all different types of bad things /laugh/ you know typically going on because people are desperate so sometimes they don't have money and they have to do what they have to do to get money they can't go into the suburbs you know outside of the neighbourhood and do crimes because as soon as they go outside the police would catch them so all the activities are primarily focused inside these neighbourhoods you know so it is a little difficult you know growing up in a place like this my parents were together all the time I was growing up so that was good and I think that was very important … my father had various jobs it was sort of in and out jobs he had one good and he tried to do something else and he could that job and that didn't work out so he tried something else you know so that was happening in the family and my mum was just a housewife and she was sick on and off and pregnant on and off I am the first born so all the kids come after me so I had to be I had to help <u>her</u> you know you know with the kids.

I Do you mind if I ask you how many brothers and sisters do you have?

AB have one brother and three sisters, my mother had during the course of my life

during that time she had maybe two miscarriage so she was pregnant a lot .

I How about your parents Were they from the same area I mean?

AB My parents grew up in the projects when the projects was first built that is

where they met each other so my father was best friend with my mother's

brother you know at a very young age (.) and he said he watched her sort of

bloom into a women /laughter/ you know and that when he became interested

in her.

I So he is much older than her.

AB No no like the same age when you are a <u>kid</u> that situation you deal with the

brother as you are not really noticing the sister you know because you dealt

with the brother then he noticed the sister and of course there were some

friction in that but they got over it they ended up.

I And they were married.

AB And they got married and everything is cool you know.

I So the jobs where your father was moving on and out did that affect the

stability, the financial stability?

AB Sure, you know definitely affected the economics of the household you know

there is plenty of times we had something to <u>eat</u> but you know it was difficult (.)

you know it was difficult he started borrowing money you know it was difficult

you know we were religious though (.) I grew up as a Christian.

I OK

AB this particular group of Christians which is called the Jehovah's Witnesses. I am not sure if you are familiar with this group?

I No to be honest

AB this group is called the Jehovah's witnesses. there's many different groups in America of course as you know. Lutheranism Mormons and Catholics and Baptist you know . typically Black people in America grow up Baptists. So there is a lot of screaming and yelling in the church and singing dancing and getting the Holy Ghost and all this stuff that they do my mother side was Catholic so they were very ritual oriented a lot rituals with the Catholics you know. Baptists is not so much. Baptists you know you have to feel it. Catholics were or are more ritual oriented you know So what happened was someone gave *Da'wat* to my father from this other group of Christians yeah call Jehovah's Witnesses. and Jehovah's Witnesses are like I like *Tableg'i jamaat* [laughter]. you know *tableg'I jamaat* in Islam

I yeah

AB they are like *Tableg'i jamaat* of the Christians you know they tried to give a lot of *Da'wat*. They would come and nock your doors you know we want to talk to you today we have some publications you know

I Do they have like a certain figure in the state?

AB They are well known in the states.

I Do they have someone or a text which they follow?

AB they have like like not a main person . it is like a like *ashura* they had like *ashura* a group of the people who supposed to get some *wahy*. you know

and then they make their decision based on that [laughter] each individual church what they call Kingdom hall has a person who's in charge. it's a system yeah it's assistant they have a lot of money a lot of people get involved in this particular group and

I   Are they mostly black?

AB   I don't know I don't know about that but from what I've noticed growing up whenever we went to like conferences at Yankee Stadium or Shea stadium or something like this most of the people there were black you know out of 30,000 people who know most of the people are black. my father got interested in this particular group because he was turned off by the Baptists you know and the way he grew up he was turned off because there is a lot of singing and dancing and you know the feeling you know he wasn't feeling it is like a Sophie thing you know. So one of the main things with this particular group also is that number one they they're big on giving *Da'wat* and then number two they are the *bedah* police of the Christians OK. so they were refused the Catholics there were few the Mormons there refute the seven day aventis and the baptism and anyone else. so my father liked that because he realised that for example Christmas you know Christians celebrate Christmas they picked December the 25th out of the year you know or maybe based on some Roman Caesar you know and that's what they follow based on that but it wasn't actually Christ birthday you know. so of course Jehovah's witnesses would say no and why do you celebrate Christmas anyway no Valentine's Day Halloween out birthdays days out so all my life I'm never celebrated Christmas I've never celebrated birthdays I never celebrated Valentines or Halloween an idiot that stuff we didn't do it because it wasn't us it wasn't originally part of the

Christian religion OK that's interesting you know can you cook without just coming away this question

I I know that the christmas is widely celebrated in the States, how did you avoid celebrating that?

AB Just like the Muslims just like the Muslims do live in the West is this you know the same type of sort of mentality you know I mean you know you there you deal with it and you do your thing and everyone around you is on their stuff and you know *lakum deenakum waliya Dīn*

I What about your mother , did she follow your father?

AB of course the mother follows the father unless the man is *Dayoth* you know the woman is going to follow up man you know typically so she followed you know she got into it

I they converted before you were born

AB no after

I do you have any experience with their previous believe

AB by the time I was born that's when they sort of started getting into it

In Christian fiath they have many version of the bible which one do they follow?

they rejected the King James version obviously being that it's you know from King James and it's translated from from Latin to old English you know you know from aramaic in Greek and Hebrew to English you know it's it's not gonna work you know so they rejected that version of the Bible and they came

up with what they call the new world translation of the Bible so they translate they call it a new world translation of the Bible so they translated the pipe from its day this is what they claim from aramaic and Hebrew they have up to English sentence but I don't have account for this

I   do you have the text

AB   no I don't know I don't know this is what they claimed to do that they translated it to modern everyday basic English alright. and they have their own *Tafseer* okay and it's very throuhg the very through about what they believe in you know and because they are that way it's easy for them to say this thing in Christianity is wrong this thing in Christianity is a *bedah* this thing that Christianity is wrong that you know is an elevation

I   Just wondering what they say about the trinity concept in Christianity?

AB   Their concept of that they have that concept would a different thinking so this still think that Jesus is they still think that Jesus didn't they they think that Jesus is the son of God in a part but not necessarily God himself that he's apart of God an extension so they still make the *Shirk* you know in this way. You have to go through Jesus to get God you know. so when they you know like we have something to eat you know my father would say you know **in the name of Jesus we have this food and we thank you** and now we need to do that type of thing so it's still *Shirk* but they try to make they sort of have a concept with distinction you know but it's not a clear distinction that's the problem…

I   So what about school, can you tell me about it?

AB   Yeah we just you know for example they can school they had they had the pleasure allegiance you know like here in the schools will do in the morning the kids line up outside and they say the national anthem of Saudi Arabia or whatever. we weren't allowed to do that because separation of church and state so if they we're choosing allegiance to the flag in class or any type of situation we would not stand up we wouldn't put our hand on heart we wouldn't participate if there was a Christmas party or birthday party we wouldn't participate.

I   Ok

AB   they did it and we would just you know I would just stand off to the side you know just do something else. even with relatives you know somebody they had a birthday party and we happen to come by we would't eat need the cake

I   so it seems that you were very into it

AB   yeah yeah no question for a time. like I said I experienced this you know cause I'm the first born so I got the brunt of it in the beginning and you know it was good thing we were involved he would go to the called the Kingdom hall we used to go to the Kingdom hall for Bible studies you know of course on Sunday during the week you know for Bible studies my father used to have Bible studies in our house and we had chairs that had the line up you know saying people come to our house and we would have like a little *doroos* you know. so we were very active my father was trying to be wanted to be an elder you know. he wanted to be involved in the church he was doing that time he was sort of grooming me to be a preacher also so when they had what they called Bible study or Bible class I would give talks when I was 10 11 years old I used to give talks in the church you know my father right everything on index cards

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you know and that you know practise it with him and some of the names you know they were difficult like nebuchadnezzar or something like this and we go over it like what I'm saying and practise. and he was really grooming me you know to be that. And it was part of our everyday life you know we were very involved even if he was out of work and our financial situation wasn't strong our religious situation was strong you know and he had this sort of *Eman* if we can call it that everything is going to work out everything's gonna be OK he always got to situations where things would work out you know after a bad situation it would always work out and we just went through like that. by the time my parents daughter having my siblings and I was older basically in my teens my father I guess he felt he had to work more get more money because now he got these kids our participation in the church went down so he's working more work is going up, but his involvement with the church was going down. Because now he's working two jobs you know my mother's not really taking us back and forth to the church you know she's pregnant or she was sick. but you know and he can't do as he's at work all the time so our participation really really went down you know doing this time and he's trying to get us out of the projects you know so it's a situation where he has all of these children coming you no more coming and he's trying to get us out of the project's because it's a mess you know it's a terrible environment.

I Can I refer to the projects here with whom you used to hang out to go.

AB Everyone there was black they were all Black People (.) no white people may be there were three Puerto Rican families but that was it everyone also is black so all my experience basically growing up with Black People even with the Kingdom Hall (.) I really mean skin wise they were all Black People one of the things my father did is he made a point for us to go to school outside the

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projects that when I started experiencing white people I mean white kids because you know according to your zone that where you supposed to go to school and typically that is going to be in the black neighbourhood (.) he found a way /laughter/ to get us out as far as schooling is concern (.) and it .. for <u>me</u> aa it really expanded my horizon dealing with other people (.) typically big cities in America you have China town you have Arab town you have Jewish communities you know what I am saying (.) you know I experienced that when I got older (.) if I wanted a real Italian food I know the way to go you know the real Italian neighbourhood and get real Italian food I want Korean I want Japanese I want Chinese you can see the distinctions, you know the distinction you know the neighbourhoods you know emm … and when you dealing with white people as I was growing up (.) I realized you know that there is many different facets to them you know, Irish guy is not like an Italian guy an Italian guy is not like a Jewish guy (.) you know a Greek guy is not like an Italian guy everyone you know they have their own culture their own distinctions.

I There are communities within.

Ab So I thought that was interesting and I was impressed and enjoyed it you know meeting with different people and dealing with different people.

I You have that experience when you were at school.

AB Yeah and hanging out with the kids after school because I could have a lot I could cut school a lot.

I I expect them to be from a different neighbourhood I mean they are not from the projects.

AB   No they aren't.

I   were they still within what that if I could call that working class.

AB   Yeah middle class people you know basically everyone struggling in America they are trying to sustain themselves you know there is in a certain lifestyle (.) I wasn't with like rich white kids (.) you know just regular white kids.

I   Okay.

AB   And we were all and being young men we were all adventurous and we want to do different things good and bad and I was always down I was always okay so let's go let's do it you know /laughter/ and.

I   Ready to go as we say now.

AB   Ready to go and the girls off forget about it /laughter/ the girls you know they gave me access to a whole new stream of females you know.

I   In your school or the school outside.

AB   The school and hanging out with white boys (.) different groups of white boys aa so I was able to date to Jewish girls Italian girls German girls Irish girls and of course you know back when I go back to the projects black girls my black. girlfriends Latino girls so it gave me access to more women as a young teenage man which is very important /laughter/.

I   So how do you describe your relation with these white boys? Was there any kind of racism?

AB   These particulate white boys that I delt with, they were down to earth. As a teenager they never had seen me as an outside. And I guess this is because

of my status I was sort of big I was bigger than them [laughter] taller and stronger more experience with my hands they wouldn't taste me…

I   can I ask something here when you say girlfriend, to what extent can you describe the relationship?

AB   the full extent from going to the movies and going to a finding a place to hang out [laughter] sort of speak.

I   But you are a teenager.

AB   In the states typically in the states a young man will lose his virginity 13 14 15 years old a girl 16 17 she looses her virginity by that time if you don't and everyone knows about it just there is something wrong with you. for example if a girl who is 16 years old and she is still a virgin people would say you know you know how could you have a boyfriend you good looking girl why don't you have a boyfriend

I   Even from her family?

AB   probably from the family to you know a young boy some fathers white boys usually white families some fathers will take their son 14 15 or 16 years old if they feel that he's not experienced but he's not getting any experience sexually father will take his son to a prostitute

I   [laughter] okay that's quite weird?

AB   You understand

I   OK [laughter] I feel this is quite intense.

AB   you know things progressed you know like I said my father wasn't you know he's working all the time and I'm getting more involved in outside you know in the street more than anything else you know… as I progressed from my teenage years into my 20s and I basically wasn't it you know we weren't involved in the church I hadn't gone to church in years but I still hold the beliefs I still felt that the things that I had learned were true and at Christmas wasn't real you know in that sense and that you know Halloween is a disaster you know what I'm saying why would anyone do that Valentine's Day Mother's Day these type of things not necessary in our lives you know it wasn't necessary in my life and I was able to live life without them you know comfortably it wasn't like a big deal you know even if it was somebody's birthday or something like this came up you know they breakout a couple of drinks and is just like any other day anyway [laughter] so I that just progressed that way through my you know through my 20s up until my 30s and I didn't really focus on anything you know spiritually or religiously it was all *dunya dunya dunya* …

I   Did you go to college

AB   I went to college

I   can I ask you what did you do?

AB   What did you do there my my background I was studying business administration so I was going for that I wanted to get involved in business. college is a little rough because at that time what happened was when I was 19 I decided to move out not because of any friction with my parents or anything but because I wanted my independence.

I   Which is common I guess

AB Not always some of my friends didn't manage to do well I was only one out of my friend. I have my own place so wasn't that common but thinking is common and it's an okay thing to do for a boy young men but it's hard to do financially so when I was 19 you know I moved out and I worked and I went to school at the same time so I went to school during the day and I worked at night to maybe 11 12 o'clock at night you know and whatever activity I can do outside of that to make extra money I did and I just continued that way you know from 19 on up I never went back. plus you have your own place again it opens up a whole another level of women [laughter] because you know you could have a place to go so you know it stayed that way you know and you know you just concentrate on *dunya.* when I got up into my 30s and once you have everything achieved you know certain things you have the house you have the cars you have girlfriends that's when I started really thinking about changing my life. because you know maybe have a BMW now you want m Mercedes maybe you have a arrange house now you want to a three Stores house you know we have four girlfriends you want you know 5 you want 10 you know it just my thinking is this is this what life is all about you know is gotta be you know more substance to this life. also thinking you know about you know things that you've done you know that may not have been correct trying to make some type of repentance you know and you just you know you start thinking about your life you know overall you know when you start getting to thirties basically just doing the same thing all the time you know

I you didn't get married

AB   I wasn't married I was even not thinking about getting married it wasn't important financially I was table good job had everything you know everything under control

I   It must be hard to achieve in a mega city like *****

AB   it's a hard place to survive you know but I was able to do it you know and looking at some of my friends it was difficult for them you know but they were sorted just getting started you know to do what I had had already done because I had started so early you know. now looking back I don't agree about doing it that way but that's what happened so what had happened was during that time there was a there was a March on two things happen.

I   okay, before you go on do you want to stop here and leave this for the next meeting.

AB   No I don't want to lose my train of thought

I   Ok

Ab   There was a movie about Malcolm X if you are familiar with Malcolm X.

I   Who.

AB   Okay, Malcolm X was a very popular political black activist in the seventies, sixties and seventies.

I   Okay I know who he is.

AB   There is a couple of different guys this particular one is Malcolm X.

I   I know Malcolm X.

AB Okay his story was coming out there is a book about him by Alex Haley and movie came out about his life (.) and it is sort of aspirational you know because we had similar backgrounds went through similar things (.) I looked at Mohammad Ali the boxer also similar situations as black men in America in his journey (.) and then there was this they called the million man million man march in Washington DC that was organized by this guy Louis Farrakhan in the Nation of Islam (.) this particular group Nation of Islam is very big and very popular in America.

I In the sixties isn't it?

AB Up till now.

I Up till now.

AB Up till now very big very popular lot of money and they organized this march in Washington for black rights in I think it was the nineties (.) so me and a friend of mine we went to the march (.) because even though I was able to deal with Black People and Latino people I could still deal with white people too but I am the black man in a white man world that is the reality of it okay I have white friends and we are good together do things (.) but when it comes down to I am the black man in America and it is not easy /laughter/

I Okay.

AB so they organized this particular march in Washington to sort of protest for rights and dignity police killing Black People you know even up till now almost weekly things were hard things were tough and it was not right you know so we feel oppressed of course because we are oppressed (.) so all of these things sort of hit me at the same time (.) and this particular group in the Nation

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of Islam we call now the nation of ignorance they claim to be Muslim and there is many different groups in America they claim to be Muslim (.) this particular group is not (.) at the time I was thinking of going back into Christianity (.) but I didn't feel comfortable because a lot of things that my father went through in the group when he stopped going they really like dissociated with him and made him feel like outsider I didn't like that (.) and I didn't agree with certain aspects of the group you know so I said I am not going back to be with Jehovah Witness (.) but I see this group Nation of Islam they are popular you see them in the neighbourhood helping poor people they would stop people from dealing drugs in the corner they open up stories and shops they are very so social active (.) and I liked that and I thought that is a good thing and I thought about going to that group based on that so I started thinking to their lectures buying some of their books and materials (.) and what I found out was from one of their main books which is called message to the black man from this guy Elijah Mohammad this particular book is the *'Aqīdah* book.

I What.

AB *'Aqīdah.*

I Was it Message to Islam?

AB Message to a black Man.

I Okay.

AB In this book /laughter/ they say that this man Elijah Mohammad who wrote this book is a messenger I didn't know any better then they said his teacher is *Allāh*.

I　*Allāh*?

AB　Yeah, another man, now you say you are messenger I didn't know any better you are just saying this guy is god (.) this didn't make any sense to me then in this book they also say that white people all white people are devils and all Black People are gods and that Black People came from another planet another solar system in a space ship landed on this planet and that is how we got here (.) white people are from animals dogs mix of dogs pig rats like this that is why you may see white people they have grey eyes their hair is straight like dogs it is brown or grey like any animals their eyes are in different colours like animals (.) they descended from animals therefore they are *Shyateen* /laughter/

I　Interesting

AB　And this was their concepts they came up the sixties when Black People where really getting hammered so they basically took they took Christian concept and make it black (.) this guy is god this guy is Jesus (.) it is the same thing basically and they put Islamic twist on it you know even (.) I didn't know anything about Islam but I know this is crazy /laughter/ I know this was crazy so I didn't get involved in this group I rejected that.

I　This is the first time you here about Islam

AB　Yeah but even before I'll say this for quick you know growing up I met Muslims you know there's Muslims you know around us but unfortunately these Muslims you know most of them Muslims that we meet most Muslims in the state are the Arab ones you know Yemenis Palestinians Egyptians not not a lot of Saudis and Khaleejs okay Syrians and Lebanese you know and when

they come to the state of course Pakistanis are number but from the Arabs when we see them they're working in *bagalah* you know they have no *Dīn* with them. And they make a distinction between us and them you know they treat us like as a low class even they are in neighbourhoods selling us alcohol and pork you know they would make a ham sandwich you know in a minute they could care less they may not eat it but they will let you do it. those sell alcohol alcohol in their stores they may not drink it but they'll sell it to you you know they mess with the girls you know you don't see them praying you see them smoking and you don't see any religion on them days this Arabs you know. so when I saw Muslims they were just Arabs. There were no Islam on them you know what I'm saying. even with the Pakistanis and Indians there was nothing on I don't see religious you know I don't see Muslims. and the ones that I saw this nation of Islam people you know the black ones so that's what geared me towards that you know.

I   that's interesting so even at school you didn't meeting any Muslims?

AB   No, not that I can recall not one. very few I mean in America you got maybe 30 million 35 million tops you know and out of that you know half of them got nothing. They do not do anything. they want to American you know what I'm saying an OK so half of them they just want to American. now you got another half they are just black out of the 15 you got 7 that are black and then trying to do something you know but you know maybe some *Sofia* maybe some Shia you know what I'm saying. and then the other the other seven million while Arabic Pakistani and Indian they're trying to do something but they only trying to do something themselves or t for their for their communities. there's a lot of

hezbiah you know so it's it's tough to really find a good way but I was fortunate

but we'll get into that later I guess we should stop here

I   This is interesting, very interesting thank you

Appendix 4

Notes for Abdulrahim's first interview.

February 5th 2018

- I came to Jalal office, so he can take me to Abdulrahim's Office. We walk through the corridor and met Abdulrahim at his door office. Abdulrahim was a very tall man. Abdulrahim has a long fair beard, which tidily slides down his light brown face. He was dressed in local Saudi dress. He was wearing a thobe, and he covered his head with a kufiyah. After we exchanged greeting and I came into the office which he shares with another Iranian British teacher who is apparently a very religious person. Before I came it appears that Abdulrahim was listening to a religious lecture from the YouTube while he was having his lunch meal and his officemate was reviewing Quran versus. I came to the office and I gave Abdulrahim the consent form and the information sheet to sign off. Then I start the interview.

- Abdulrahim has a PC on his table and as we had the interview there has been a few instances in which students knocking the door.

- At the end of the interview, both of us had left the room, and we went to the prayer room in the hallway where he led us for Aadhar prayer. Abdulrahim was come and very confident in the way he talked that day. He seemed also to be very respected by the students, as he has been greeted by many and sometimes he was called Shaikh instead of teacher or doctor, which are the more common ways of addressing staff by students.

- We agreed that we will do our next meeting on the next Sunday at the same time.
- On the next meeting I will ask him to start from the point were he talked about the two events that drew his attention to Islam.