'Reclaiming British Gujarati Culture after Conversion to Evangelical Christianity'

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ABSTRACT

When the Gujarati diaspora from India and East Africa arrived in Britain from the mid twentieth century onwards, their religio-cultural beliefs were based on replications and adaptations due to their migratory history. Their primary goal was to fulfil their religious duty to the whole extended family, to increase financial capital, and to ensure that coming generations would have the hope of a prosperous future. As the younger generations became accustomed to life in Britain, their ideologies adjusted to the customs in Britain. The Gujarati geographical diaspora was subject to a less visible ideological diaspora influenced by British Christianity that resulted in the challenge of the binary of religious affiliation. For some British Gujarati this resulted in a complete change of religious self-identity to Evangelical Christianity.

By using ethnography and autoethnography this thesis probes into the lives of the British Gujarati who have chosen to self-identify as Christian. Through conversations, interviews and extended field visits it became apparent that the daily lives of the converts and all those around them continue to be impacted by the individual decision to change their religion. The challenges they face are explored using anthropological theories of social identity and the changes in interaction with people, places and decision making practices.

Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social fields and Michel de Certeau's spatial theory, facilitates the analysis of the lived realities of British Gujarati converts. By connecting muted group theory to the conversion experiences, I explore how multidimensional social spaces and multiple identities are used to navigate relational networks and contribute to the adaptation of transcultural practices.

This thesis provides a unique exploration and understanding of the impact of Christian conversion on the British Gujarati diaspora. It also explores the complication of self-identity and the problems incurred through the imposed binaries of identifications by others. By investigating the idea of multiple identities, the thesis unmutes British Gujarati Converts' experiences of family roles, places of belonging and decision making.

'Reclaiming British Gujarati Culture for British Gujarati Converts to Evangelical Christianity'

by

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DECLARATIONS

[In absentia, sign, date, scan (preferably into .pdf), and e-mail; or post or fax]

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed _Ulrike Reitgruber_ (Candidate)

Date _2nd August 2022_

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed _Ulrike Reitgruber_ (Candidate)

Date _2nd August 2022_

STATEMENT 2

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DEDICATION

Mata: Kunverben Hirabhai Patel

Pita: Hirabhai Somabhai Patel

Guru: Dr. Joel Edwards & Dr. Janette Davies

Deva: Almighty God

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GLOSSARY

Ashrama - stages of life in the cycle of reincarnation

Ba - mother

Bahen - (honorary suffix from woman meaning sister)

Ben - (as above)

Bhakt - worship

Chandlo - coloured mark worn on the forehead of married women,

Gam - village

Jaat - caste or type

Ji - (honorary suffix)

Puja - religious ritual involving lighting diva, placing food, flowers in front of shrines and singing an *arti* (religious song)

Rakhi - a cord tied on the wrist as a symbol of protection

Samsara - cycle of reincarnation

Sanyas - one who has renounced the world to focus purely on God

Mata - mother

Moti - older or greater (female)

Moto – older or greater (male)

Mota - older or greater female or greater male or plural

Thali - circular stainless steel or copper tray that hold the items for *puja*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

British Gujarati - BG

British Gujarati Christian Convert – Convert or BGC

British Evangelical Church - BEC

British Gujarati London Church 1 - London Church or BGLC1

Chapter 1: Introduction

Raksha and I are in her rented upper floor rooms of a semi-detached house in N. London. We are both in the kitchen when our eyes are drawn to the street below. We lean over the sink to get a better view. Cars are arriving. First, we see women pour out into the street, dressed in beautiful *saris*; then little girls in bright *sharwal kamees* or *lengha;* men in fine suits or traditional *sherwani* or *kurta* paired with designer jeans. We peer out of the window further then look at each other. Raksha is wearing mismatched fluffy pyjamas and I am in my husband's old oversized grey t-shirt that bears the words, 'Every Tribe, Every Tongue, Every Nation.' Diwali morning and we are alone. **Here we are, far from our family, unfamiliar with our mother tongue and somewhat deracinated.** (my emphasis)

Back to the bustle outside, people greet one another. Some are carrying packages of *gungra* and different types of *mithai,* the traditional sweets for Diwali. An older woman adjusts the sari of a younger one. The teenage girls huddle together and look at each other's saris, adjust a pleat here, stretching their hands through the flowing piece of fabric over the shoulder. Teenage boys step back and allow the elders to pass by into the house first. 'Selfies' are clicked. Cheeks are pinched. Kisses are shared as babies are passed from hip to hip.

As some disappear into the house, others arrive, and the scene continues. We look again and point out various colours and styles of clothing. Slowly the crowd, oblivious of our voyeurism, vanishes into the house. We take a couple of *gungra* from the fridge and heat them up in the microwave. As British Gujarati Christian converts this was as close as we might ever get to celebrating Diwali. FN/BGLC1/16

This excerpt from my field notes was captured during one of my earliest field visits (October 2016). Of the over half a million population of British Gujarati (BG) reports of Christian conversions are estimated at less than half a percent and difficult to verify. Within this excerpt are the themes that were generated during my research. The cultural change of conversion has significant impact on the structural family roles of the individual, the family and their broader network relationships. These in turn affect their place of belonging. Location based belonging goes beyond the individual convert and their personal spaces to include the families and their connections to the networks of relationships. Discovering the basis for the change in religio-cultural identity therefore requires an unravelling of how the sources of authority change in the lives of the British Gujarati Christian Converts.[1]

The reflections in the excerpt are from a Diwali morning from a Convert's perspective. While Diwali is based on a Hindu religious story, of much greater importance is the idea of family and community gathering. Relationship between individuals, family members and entire networks are based upon the affirmation and overlap of interactions during religio-cultural celebrations that most often come to an abrupt end as a result of conversion. For the British Gujarati the consequences of a focused Christian religious identity in many cases lead to unforeseen outcomes that have varying levels of effect on the Convert, their family and their community. Furthermore, the Converts join British

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[1] British Gujarati Christian converts will be referred to as 'Converts' or BGC in this thesis.

Evangelical Christian groups that do not have the experience to be able to adequately help them into the appropriate application of culturally sensitive religio-cultural practices. The conflicts experienced by the Converts as a result of conversion within the family and community network are never completely resolved.

Through this research I explore how those British Gujaratis who have chosen to self-identify as Christian have experienced problematic cultural belonging. Their enculturation into the British Evangelical Church has inadvertently been socially restrictive and thus detrimental to both their British Gujarati and British Evangelical communities. It is hypothesised that as the Converts do not live in isolation from the British Gujarati community, there are opportunities for multiple cultural identities and belongings that would affirm transcultural practices. The flexibility of interaction is supported by intertwining Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau's theories of society and by drawing in muted group theory to demonstrate how Converts function in their multiple social fields.

1.1 Opening Statements

This introductory chapter began by capturing a reflective moment in a Convert's experience. It provides a foreground for the thesis. This will be followed by explaining the background of the research problem and the research question. The next section gives introductory definitions of terminology and the Gujarati migratory history and their specific phases of diaspora in order to comprehend the specifics of the British Gujarati conversion experiences.

The following section clarifies the background of the research and introduces some of the concepts relating to conversion. In addition, a subsection on the specifics of a celebration of the festival of *Rakshabandan* helps to reveal how the British Gujarati are able to adapt cultural expressions despite geographical and cultural changes.

The segment on British Evangelicalism expounds the background of the defined beliefs and the lived practices of British Evangelicals. Afterwards, there is an examination of the manner in which the British Gujarati understand British Evangelical Christians' beliefs and practices. The conclusion culminates with a brief outline of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1.2 Background to the Research

The anthropologist, Henri Gooren (2014), in his studies on conversion, notes the difficulties in coming to terms with religious conversion. He recognises the challenge of,

"developing comparative approaches to conversion to a host of religions in ways that includes indigenous understandings of the religions and explores their interaction with globalization processes" (2014:85). Gooren further notes the strengths of the anthropological approach to conversion as including, long-term perspective, ethnographic approach, theoretical flexibility, focus on cultural context in understanding conversion cross culturally (2014:85).

When the British Gujarati Convert to Christianity, their exchange of Hindu religious identity for a new Christian identity leads to varying levels of conflict of individual, familial and cultural belonging in their British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian contexts. From a British Evangelical Christian perspective, religion is often projected on to Hindus as a definitive binary of affiliation. Hinduism is believed to incorporate all aspects of the life of a Hindu. For the BG whose understanding of religion is strongly influenced by the West, simply stated, everything Indian is Hindu.

In order to replace a Hindu identity with a Christian identity the Converts are compelled to reject aspects of their lives that connect to Hinduism. Through a Western interpretation of Christian identity, Converts are sometimes inadvertently encouraged to abandon their traditional cultural practices as they are considered part of the former Hindu identity and must not be brought into their new Christian identity. As a result of conversion, many Converts experience levels of isolation from their British Gujarati family and are unable to experience the sense of fully belonging in the British Evangelical Church.

Essentialised understandings of religious belonging contribute to the challenges faced by the British Gujarati who choose to identify as a Christian. The purpose of this research is to demonstrate how their chosen religious identity affects the social capital of their families and community. This study will show how some Converts negotiate their identity and sense of belonging by creating ways that might encourage flexible transcultural practices.

1.3 Research Question

Religious conversion amongst the Gujarati diaspora is an under-researched area of study. This study aims to draw attention to the voices of the British Gujarati Christian Converts by addressing the following question: -

By what means and to what extent do the British Gujarati become transcultural through Christian conversion?

The question is supported by a series of sub-questions: -

a. *How have the structural family relationships within the British Gujarati family been altered through instances of conversion?*

b. *How is the sense of belonging of the British Gujarati Christian Convert formed?*

c. *What elements influence, inform and shape the exercise of authority in the life of the British Gujarati Christian Convert?*

1.4 Introductory Definitions

The term religio-cultural is applied in this thesis as a combination of religious and cultural beliefs. This is based upon Arvind Sharma's application of the term from a Hindu perspective, "A significant cultural factor is the fact that Hinduism is as much a culture as a religion, or alternatively, that distinction between religion and culture is alien to it" (Sharma 2014:432). The combination of religious and cultural practices may also be described as an explanation of routinised behaviour. Behaviour associated with a perceived transcendental reality is combined with specifics of descent, language, territory, cognition and social behaviour (Saraglou & Cohen 2011; Saler 1987).

Religious rituals are historic rites that allow sanctioned access into a belief system. Rituals are also routines replicated as ceremonial actions based upon sacred symbols. Religious practices are choices of behaviour as understood and determined by the family and/or the individual. Rituals and practices serve to affirm affiliation to the chosen belief system. For Harvey Whitehouse (2021), diverse behaviours, including rituals, do not necessarily have a causal structure but may span evolving patterns of culture. If we think of culture as the 'rules of the game', then transculturalism stretches those rules.

The term 'transcultural' has multiple meanings as applied in this thesis. It may convey ideas of shared interests and values as defined by Richard Slimbach (2005:206). These may be overlapping cultural practices but also be awareness of alternative ways of thinking as a way of decentring from one's firmly held cultural perspective. Transculturalism is subject to elements of symbolic interaction by and with individuals in context. There is a wider variety of interpretations of symbols based upon multiple meanings, values, and experiences (Lewis 2002:24).

Robert Hefner (1993:6) refers to the 'different cultural shadings' in comparison to a presumed monolithic Christian culture. While this could be applied to a static form of transculturalism, the idea of the movement of ideas and influences, practices and beliefs that interact briefly or overtime in specific locations, relationships and practices would be the best way to define how the term 'transcultural' is applied in this thesis.

The term habitus as used by Pierre Bourdieu is applied throughout this thesis in different ways. Firstly, I will use it as a term to categorise ingrained habits, tendencies,

and mannerisms that are shared with other people of similar backgrounds. Secondly, I will use habitus in the sense of a system of arrangement that informs, creates and supports other structures (Bourdieu 1977).

The terminology for defining different generations of diaspora will refer to first generation as those individuals who leave their country of origin from adolescence to adulthood. Children from the primary school age to pre-adolescence are considered the 1.5 generation. Non-verbal infants and children born in the host country are referred to as the second generation (Ruben 2004).

I categorise the British Gujarati diaspora within the Indian diasporas. The term 'India' brings into reference a particular historical and political paradigm. I will use the term 'India' in reference to the nation of India post-independence as none of the participants have any connection to Pakistan or Bangladesh. I will use the term 'Indian' as is commonly used in the English language, but will add the additional adjectives of the region and/or language e.g., Gujarati, Punjabi, for further qualification. These serve as anchors rather than definitions and are relevant beyond a physical scattering to a dispersion of religious ideologies.

As of 2000, of the 403,200 Indian Hindus in Britain, seventy percent are Gujarati (Vertovec 2000). Many Indians were forced to leave African countries due to unrest during struggles after political independence from Britain. Those that came from East Africa to Britain as part of the 'victim diaspora' (Cohen 2008:61) are referred to here as 'twice migrants' (Bhachu 1985).

All people of a diaspora may be considered migrants, as they are people on the move; all migrants may not necessarily be considered part of a diaspora. By drawing on the common metaphor for the term 'diaspora' as scattered seeds, I suggest that the seed symbolises an identifiable people group that share the same language, history and religio-cultural patterns. While the seed offers a specific visual image, it is limited. An ideological diaspora of the geographical diaspora is initially a less visible scattering.

Ideology as a system of beliefs based on what is normative in a particular vision of culture is subject to change. Individual ideological changes are interconnected and interdependent within and amongst people groups. Individual influences of the shift in ideology may be far more complex. Ideology is referenced as "Cultural beliefs that justify social arrangements, including patterns of inequality" (Macionis 2010:257). Ideological changes may not directly connect identically to others of the same people group but through individualised specific symbolic interactions. The ideological principles formed within the host country may be supported by various transcultural adjustments.

Religious self-identity is used as the individual's implemented choice to articulate their personal ideological category. Identification is used as the external categorisation applied by others in BGCs' spheres of interaction (Jenkins 2004:3).

These brief definitions provide some background on terms that will be expanded later in this thesis. The glossary section preceding this chapter provides a list of translation of terms specific to the religious languages of Hinduism.

1.5 Background of Gujarati Migratory Movements

The earliest Gujarati trade networks spread into the Indian Ocean from the eighth century. A successful merchant could become a prince. The upward social mobility opened opportunities to advance their occupational status and their religious status by adopting a god and creating places of pilgrimage along the trade routes. The cultural connections between material success and religious representation provided a place at the top of society (Mehta 2010). The connection between material gain and religious hierarchy is an important part of the Gujarati networks. There is a certain flexibility in the movement of ideas and people that influence social mobility. Along with the physical migrations of the Gujarati, their culture travelled along with them.

The arrival of the Gujarati in Britain connects to a long history of migration. Initially there were trade migrations between Gujarat and East Africa (Oonk 2006). The Gujarati in my research came through three connected and collective modern diaspora phases that occurred in conjunction with British colonization.[2]

The first phase occurred in the 1880s as the British East African Company took control of the pre-existing Gujarati trade migrations to Africa and introduced indentured servitude with the benefit of a British passport (Mehta 2001). The second phase took place after WW2 and was known as a 'free market' movement. After Indian Independence, the need for cheap labour in Britain's manufacturing, transport and health industries pulled labourers from the former colonies. Initially small numbers of men left villages in Gujarat to work in Britain in the 1950s as labourers. In the third phase, those that had gone from India to Africa were pushed to England due to hostility caused by Africanization. The third phase diaspora became victims of forced migration and are known as twice migrants.

The twice migrants had a heritage of trade and cultural variety in India and Africa. They also had a multilingual education and experience of mobilising their cultural practices. Phase 2 and Phase 3 entered Britain at the bottom of the social strata. Phase 3 had certain advantages over the migrants who came directly from Gujarat in Phase 2.

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[2] A number of the participants in the research were able to distinctly trace their family's migratory journey through all three phases of modern Gujarati diasporas.

Phase 3 also arrived often as multigenerational families. Their skills in networking and trade meant their social mobility surpassed those of Phase 2. The subsequent changes in religious identity of Phase 3 have distinct differences compared to Phase 2 British Gujarati.

1.5.1 British Gujarati Habitus

As Hinduism is a religion of great diversity, this section provides an overview of the way British Gujarati in this research community choose to practise their faith. Kim Knott draws a careful distinction between temple and home practices. The public *mandir*[3] practices are referred to as temple Hinduism following the 'great tradition' based on Sanskrit. The 'little tradition' is based upon local vernacular in what is known as domestic worship (1986:168). This takes place within the '*ghar mandir*'.[4]

The significant religious practices discussed in my research are based upon domestic Hinduism as situated within the patrilocal and natal homes. Participants' memories of temple Hinduism in the public *mandir* were of community gatherings, mainly for *Navratri garba*[5] celebrations that take place just before Diwali. Two participants, Mohan Darshan and Harshad Dev[*] shared memories of their *mandir* practices in Kenya. They accompanied male family members to give offerings to gain blessings for their business ventures.

Rajesh Josh[*], a former Swaminarayan priest, grew up practising domestic Hinduism within the family home in London but was later instructed in the great tradition in temple Hinduism. Rajesh is an example of the difference in change of practices that has occurred in the diaspora as noted by Kim Knott. She explains that in order to adjust to British practices of weekly attendance at religious services and to maintain tradition, BG *mandirs* instituted daily and weekly scheduled prayers (1986:99). Rajesh came to Britain as an infant growing up during a time when British Gujarati temple Hinduism increased the frequency of public gatherings. The increase was to reinforce Gujarati traditions that might otherwise be lost or forgotten. Had Rajesh and his family remained in Gujarat, his involvement with temple Hinduism and recruitment by a guru would not have occurred given his family's occupational tradition of migrant merchants and business proprietors.

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[3] *Mandir* means temple.

[4] *Ghar* means house in Gujarati.

[5] *Navratri Garba* means nine nights of folk dancing.

[*] Harshad Dev and Rajesh Josh both have the last name Patel but are not related to each other.

The little and great traditions cannot be separated. The great tradition may have the authority from the higher priests or be established through Hindu organisations committed to particular traditions, but the connection with domestic worship keeps the thread of continuity that leads back to the great traditions. Similarly, Richard Burghart states: "Family traditions are linked to pragmatic concerns, and are legitimated with reference to ancestral authority. The Brahmanical tradition avows transcendental preoccupation and is legitimated with reference to the timeless Brahma"[6] (1987:23). While the idea of Brahma is timeless or eternal, expressions of Brahma are not. In terms of practice, there are micro-changes that may be visible from one family's domestic worship to another. The differences are less visible when both households practise in the same public *mandir*.

In an interview with Rajesh Josh*, I asked what ritual might be considered the lowest common denominator in domestic worship in the *ghar mandir*. He responded, "The minimum is to light the *divo*[7] and place an offering of a glass milk in front of the *murti*".[8] (Rajesh/inv/3). Regardless of the location, or whether the ritual falls into doctrinal, experiential and moral categories the preparation and observance include: the whole family bathing and wearing new or finest clothes, preparing appropriate food, and sharing *prasad*.[9] Kim Knott lists six common factors in the *puja*[10] festival celebrations:

Pranama Obeisance, genuflection, homage (women cover their heads with the *sari*)

Shuddhi purification, ablution (bathing, removal of shoes, priest putting on the *chandlo*[11], performing the *arti*)[12]

Prathana petitioning, requesting

Bhajana praising through call and repeat congregational singing.

Upchara offering that include food and monetary gifts.

Prasada sacred food that is shared after it has been under the gaze of the *murti* and therefore considered blessed

(adapted from Kim Knott 1986:110)

While all the above information is available at an academic level, none of the British Gujarati or Converts in my research community made any specific reference to the above

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[6] Brahma is the ultimate creator and supreme being of the universe.

[7] *Divo* means homemade lamp.

[8] *Murti* means icon, photo or statue of deity.

[9] *Prasad* refers to food that has been placed in front of the *murti* (icons).

[10] *Puja* is the performed ritual.

[11] *Chandlo* refers to the coloured mark worn on the head of women or used in religious rituals

[12] *Arti* is a sung prayer accompanied by circulating a *thali* (circular tray) that holds flowers, *divo* (ghee lamp made with wick of cotton wool) in front of the *murti* (icons).

listed common factors in their understanding of individual, family or community practices. However, all indicated that their understanding of individual and communal well-being was through pleasing the gods by obedience to parents. The influence of parents and elders is of great importance in the different stages of life (*ashrama*).[13] Marriage and naming bring about a change of status in two different stages in the *ashrama*. Birth marks the beginning of the *ashrama* and leads to the student stage. The change of status from the student to the householder stage is through marriage. This is arranged or at the very least influenced. The benefit is for the individuals, in honour of the past, to the advantage of the present, and for the hope of future generations.

Attendance and involvement in the public *mandir* during events such as Navratri, that bring interaction with family, friends and the broader community have significant meaning to an active religious self-identity. Social identification and belonging are reaffirmed at these times. *Holi* is defined as a celebration of the victory of good over evil (Knott 1986:106). Once again none of the British Gujarati or Converts focused their attention on the meanings of festivals but rather recognised the value of social interactions. One festival that has adjusted and continued in diaspora and appeared to vary and adjust amongst the British Gujarati was *Rakshabandan*. I found *Rakshabandan* to have the strongest connection to domestic worship in the 'little tradition' and yet provide the connection to *mandir* worship and 'great tradition' through mythology. A deeper exposition of the tradition will now follow.

1.5.2 *Rakshabandan*

Rakshabandan is an ancient tradition practised in India. The term *Rakshabandan* is found in Sanskrit and Gujarati and formed from the words *raksha* meaning protection and *bandan* meaning to tie or bind. The tradition is focused on sisters tying a cord or ornament around the wrist of brothers and giving them something sweet[14] to symbolise commitments to pray for their brothers' success. The brothers respond by giving their sisters a gift of cash, clothing or jewellery as a reminder of brotherly duties to protect and provide for sisters in the event of mistreatment or misfortune in the patrilocal home. The practice begins at home amongst brothers and sisters from the earliest age to acknowledge and memorialise the unique bond between brothers and sisters which includes cousin brothers and cousin sisters. These are first and second cousins who count as siblings.[15]

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[13] *Ashrama* means stages of life.

[14] Some type of sweet, sugar or fruit is always used to commemorate any joyous festival.

[15] First and sometimes second cousins are referred to as cousin brothers and cousin sisters. They are also included at *Rakshabandan*. This is significant if there are no sons in the family.

The origin of the tradition is hard to pinpoint. In temple Hinduism, priests would tie cords of protection on kings and rulers. However, the annual *Rakshabandan* festival has some connections to an account of an incident in the sixteenth century when a widowed Indian queen is aware that she cannot defend herself against invading forces. Her mother sent a *rakhi* to a Mughal emperor asking him to take care of the widowed queen as his sister (Chandra 2005). The story was remembered less for the outcome of the battle than as a representation of relationship-based protection between Hindus and Muslims (Chandrababu & Thilgavathi 2009). The custom of *Rakshabandan* was also connected to the village tradition of brides leaving the natal home[16] (Wadley 2005; Coleman 2017). There is also a modern appropriation that connects to peace-making practices after Indian Independence (Khandekar 2003).

Given that the majority of British Gujarati come from rural areas, the practice in the diaspora is most likely connected to village traditions. This is the commonly held belief of the purpose as revealed in the *Rakshabandan* questionnaire and field notes. The event affirms and supports the continued connection between women and their brothers, thus their extended family in their natal home (FN/R). In terms of core understandings of religio-cultural beliefs, *Rakshabandan* acknowledges the value of siblings as mutual care and support throughout childhood and adulthood.

Primarily, it consolidates the role of the brother as a safety net and protector of his sisters (within their natal family) and reinforces the duty of care beyond the lifespan of ageing parents. In his sister's patrilocal[17] home, the visit from her brother reminds everyone of valued relationships that pre-exist marriage. After marriage, the brother in the natal home is the only source of representational protection and support for the married sister living in her patrilocal family (Agarwal 1994:264; Coleman 2017). It is also a reminder that daughters are, or will one day be in their patrilocal homes, subject to social fields where they must navigate initially as outsiders.

Every year at *Rakshabandan*, brothers may make a special visit to sisters to either bring them back to the natal home or to connect with their sisters' marital families to maintain relations with the in-laws (Goody 1990:224). However, it is also common for sisters to go to the homes of their brothers. For their part, brothers engaging in these exchanges affirm the otherwise hard-to-discern moral solidarity of the natal family, even after their sister's marriage (Coleman 2017:127).

In more recent years, greeting cards are available in multiple languages with poetic verses that express love, respect and honour of the brother's role as protector. Virtual

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[16] Natal home or family refers to the home or family of birth.

[17] Patrilocal home means father's home but also refers to the permanent home of women after marriage.

rakhi are sent through the Internet. Elaborate *rakhi* made of costume jewellery may be purchased online or in Indian gift shops. The globalisation of the celebration has brought an adaptation to Western celebrations with gifts and commercialised emotional expressions in greeting cards.

1.6 British Evangelical Christian Habitus

The above section detailed the practises of British Gujarati as heavily based upon performed imitations from Gujarat and East Africa. The link to sacred texts has no particular relevance as the collective symbol of practice holds prominence. This section begins with the statement of beliefs based upon the Bible. Comprehension of portions of the Bible, specifically the New Testament are highly significant within British Evangelical Christian habitus. Following on are the details of practices and how research conducted by the Evangelicals show the changes in habitus over the course of the last two decades.

British Evangelical Christian expression varies widely as Evangelical Christians are present in all Protestant denominations. David Bebbington defines the most basic beliefs of Evangelicalism in 'Bebbington's Quadrilateral' as conversion, Biblicism, crucicentrism and activism (1989). Even though the definition is broadly applied, there may be a variety of other beliefs that provide further structure. As an association representing British Evangelical Churches, the Evangelical Alliance provides the following statement of their beliefs:

1. The one true God who lives eternally in three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.

3. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God – fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.

4. The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement.

5. The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin.

6. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.

7. The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.

8. The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.

9. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness.

10. The church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers — given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.

11. The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.

(www.eauk.org/about-us/how-we-work/basis-of-faith)

While not all British Evangelical Christians place equal emphasis on each point in the statement of beliefs, items six to ten are most commonly held in practice and used for the purpose of proselytism. The individualised approach, such as attending any church or having a Christian heritage, does not hold any relevance without the personal conscious choice of becoming a follower of Jesus.

The practices of Evangelical Christians follow the format of weekly church service attendance at least once every Sunday. The British Evangelical Church services usually consist of a time of praise and worship through communal singing of sacred songs. Communal and individual prayers, and a reading from the Bible is followed by a sermon delivered by the ministers or elders. Holy Communion is celebrated weekly or monthly, dependent upon the tradition of the particular church. The availability of care and counsel and some type of opportunities to serve the church and local community is announced regularly. Christian commitment to the local church is through regular attendance and financial support. Until recent years, attending church twice every Sunday and an additional prayer meeting or small group held within a home was the norm.

Smaller gatherings provide opportunities to read and understand the Bible, and are also viewed as occasions to strengthen relationships amongst the group. The idea of a close family and hospitality act as ways to encourage those who are not Evangelical Christians to learn more and to convert. Understanding the application of Evangelical Christian beliefs through small groups is also accomplished by informal courses of study such as 'The Alpha Course'.[18] While created by the Anglican Church, it is also used by other Evangelical Christian groups. Part of the course is for the purpose of conversion but also to deliver knowledge on the basics of the Christian faith through discussion and studies. Other comparable courses such as 'Christianity Explored'[19] also provide similar programmes that explain facets of practice to be able to function within the church setting. Participants are also instructed on how to share their faith with others with a view to influence conversion.

The main annual Christian holy days are Christmas and Easter. Festivities are often marked by generous gifts to the needy both locally and worldwide. The church congregation is encouraged to invite their family and friends to the church service for

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[18] The Alpha Course created by Nicky Gumbel and Sandy Millar in 1977.

[19] Barry Cooper & Rico Tice 2002 *Christianity Explored* (London: Authentic Lifestyle).

these particular days to invite them to become followers of Jesus. The welcome of outsiders for the main Christian celebrations is also found amongst other Christian groups and overlaps with the broader British community habitus.

While the British Evangelical Alliance Statement[20] provides clear definitions of their basis of faith, their research in 2011 and 2021 reveal the shifts in practice. The research was conducted through a questionnaire to which 17,000 people responded. The questionnaire was distributed amongst Evangelical Christian festivals around Britain in 2010 and amongst churches that are members of the Evangelical Alliance (2010:3).

The report provides six identified characteristics of individuals that are considered 'Typically Evangelical':

1. Individuals attend church weekly.

2. Faith is of the highest importance.

3. Christians should all have involvement in evangelism.

4. Individuals commit to serve the local community through voluntary work.

5. Jesus is the only way to God.

6. Engagement in sex before marriage is wrong.

Those individuals who would be considered distinctly Evangelical are thirty-four percent more likely to hold that faith is the most prominent aspect of their lives in comparison to non-Evangelical Christians. The role of the Bible in the lives of Evangelicals is forty percent higher than non-Evangelicals. The number of Evangelicals who pray daily is also twenty-one percent higher in comparison to other Christians. Ninety-one percent of Evangelicals strongly believe in Jesus as the only way to God, which is sixteen percent more than non-Evangelicals. A strong emphasis on evangelism is considered essential by ninety-one percent of Evangelicals but only twenty-seven percent of other Christians (adapted from a 2010 report '21st Century Evangelicals: A Snapshot of the Beliefs and Habits of Evangelical Christians').

A follow-up report completed in 2021 showed that even though weekly attendance in church had decreased significantly, there was little difference in the key points of Evangelical beliefs in Jesus being the only way to God and the importance of the Bible. The public practice of ritual church attendance as a measure of individual commitment level to self-identity and identification as Evangelical Christian could thereby reveal a decline in attendance as an identifying factor of Evangelical Christian commitment. It could also be argued that the single boundary of self-identity as an Evangelical Christian

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[20] https://www.eauk.org/about-us/how-we-work/basis-of-faith [accessed 20-03-2022]

is in decline as technological advances provide increased opportunities for ideological diaspora that does not need clear connections to geographical movements.

Throughout this study, I refer specifically to British Evangelical Christianity rather than Evangelical Christianity as a whole. While there are many overlaps with Evangelical Christians worldwide, the British have a distinct perspective of their expression of faith. Their continued interaction with those of other faiths and ethnicities is specific to British society and cannot be equated with Evangelical Christianity elsewhere.

1.7 British Gujarati Perspectives of British Evangelical Christianity

While there will always be both British Gujarati and British Evangelicals who engage with each other through daily life interactions, this section will address the perceptions that British Gujarati believe British Evangelical Christians hold about them. The British Gujarati do not differentiate between different Christian denominations. A commonly held belief amongst the Gujarati is that all British people are Christian and thought to believe in proselytism. Hence, all of the British are considered to be Evangelical Christians.

Historically, the British Gujarati interaction with Christianity is positive. The presence of Christianity in India through Nestorians predates the arrival of the British colonisers and was viewed favourably (Frazier 2011). Many centuries later, the second and third phases of the Gujarati diaspora that occurred between the mid-to-late twentieth century also coincided with growth in British Evangelicalism in the larger cities of England (Goodhew & Cooper 2009). Many British Gujarati recall memories of positive encounters with Christians in Britain that centre around neighbourly kindness and generosity.

Especially prior to the establishment of *mandirs*, British Gujarati Hinduism practised the idea of pluralism as a point of connection with the British community. Many first generation British Gujarati diaspora visited churches. Throughout my research none of the parents of the 1.5 and second generation diaspora chose to remove the children from religious education classes at school. Parents often encouraged their children to attend church services.

The impression of British Evangelical Christianity has not always been positive. "Not a single Hindu saw any conflicts between the beliefs of Hinduism and Christianity in any respect other than the exclusivity of Jesus as a divine incarnation and source of salvation" (Frazier 2011:16). According to Frazier, there does appear to be some underlying tension due to the British Evangelicals understanding of Hinduism rooted in

Western academia (Frazier 2011). The exclusivity of British Evangelical Christian conversion represented all aspects of Hinduism as being in opposition to Christian beliefs.

The British Gujarati, due to their understanding of the tensions surrounding the independence of India through their parents' generations, have suspicion of conversion as part of colonisation. Those British Gujarati who experienced the British education system were also subject to an imbalanced and orientalised caricature of Hinduism by Christians (Said 1977; Frazier 2011).

Additionally, "Conversion attempts seem to be an attack on the community, and seems to indicate a denigration of the value of its beliefs" (Frazier 2011:9). The comparison between Christianity and Hinduism is often perceived as an attitude of superiority of Christians over Hindus. This adds an additional level of subjective prejudice that the British Gujarati find difficult to engage with, most especially as discussions about one another's religious beliefs are steeped in misunderstanding (Frazier 2011).

The above introductions to practices, beliefs and perspectives display the different contexts from which British Gujarati and British Evangelicals perform their religious identity. The British Gujarati rely on imitation of practices rooted in memories from home. Their personal choice of rituals and practises inform their theology. Conversely, the British Evangelicals place strong emphasis on the belief in Biblical texts specifically from the Gospels. Clearly the expectations of each belief system are grounded in their respective contexts. Yet as the different groups interact with each other in their shared geographical locations, groups and individuals are confronted with encounters with each other's ideologies.

1.8 Overview of this Thesis

Chapter 1 begins with the research question and an overview of a number of terms and how they are to be applied. I then detail different phases specific to the Gujarati diaspora thus showing the geographical shifts before their arrival in Britain. As Hinduism in Britain is not text based, the diasporic journey connects not only to people movement but also to their ability to modify religio-cultural activities. I believe these shifts contribute to the ideological movement that influences British Gujarati conversion to Evangelical Christianity.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on diaspora, conversion and social identity and how they interrelate to each other, as well as the themes that surfaced in the data collection. It also gives a review of the writings of Pierre Bourdieu that focuses on the theory of habitus and of Michel de Certeau and his theory of space and place. The

chapter ends with an introduction to muted group theory that was originally applied to feminism but is also applied to understanding the power dynamics between representative groups.

Chapter 3 starts with an explanation of my subjective epistemological position as a Convert. Following on I explain my use of ethnography and autoethnography to systematically include my personal involvement as part of the Convert's community. This chapter also offers a detailed explanation of the research design and methodology that led to the selection of the three main themes of family roles, locational belonging and the practices of authority that became prevalent in the data collection.

Chapter 4 delves into the intricacies of choices of family roles and relationships that appear to conflict with the Convert's self-identity and identification. The repercussions on family relationships and roles are the most common area of concern in the change in religious self-identity.

Chapter 5 focuses on the locational changes in terms of places of belonging. It looks at the everyday realities of how to navigate changes in locations to practise faith. but to maintain the integrity of religious self-identity and identification by others.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the challenges of altered ideas of authority in decision-making. It also details how public acknowledgement of the change in self-identity defines future interactions in the British Evangelical Christian and British Gujarati and broader British social fields.

Chapter 7 draws together the observations from the research data along with the theories of Bourdieu and de Certeau to formulate the use of muted group theory as a technique for comprehending the long-term ideological shift that is British Gujarati Christian conversion. It offers the potential of the Convert and the British Gujarati voices contributing to and engaging with British Evangelicalism with flexibilities of a transcultural habitus.

1.9 Conclusion

I began this chapter with a poignant observation at the beginning of my research journey in order to particularise the background of the research question. To add a perspective of the challenges and opportunities experienced in the Convert's life, I provided details of the British Gujarati religio-cultural practices as shared by the participants from this research, including my personal experiences. In addition, I included some aspects from published materials on the background of some rituals and practices by Kim Knott as a Western scholar of Hindu rituals. This was in recognition that part of the comprehension of diasporic Hindu practices as discussed in English has the expectation that practitioners

have a background understanding of links between practices and sacred texts or ancient rituals.

Bebbington's quadrilateral used a basic a definition of British Evangelical beliefs. This followed with the statement of beliefs of British Evangelical Christianity. The research by the Evangelical Alliance reports provided updates of British Evangelical practices.

Lastly, I detail some of the opinions of British Gujarati toward British Christians some of which were based on historical characterisations and others that were through personal experiences. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my review of the texts on the themes of diaspora, conversion and social identity. I begin with an overview of the literature on diaspora then continue with the specific British Gujarati diaspora in the twentieth century context and how these apply to conversion and social identity. Following on is a review of the literature on religious conversion, then moving to conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. After that I will focus on the area of Gujarati conversion, and how these apply to diaspora and social identity. This will be followed by a section introducing issues of social identity in terms of geographical movement and ideological exchange that occur as a result of religious conversion.

The final section will firstly introduce the theory of social fields, habitus, capitals and agency by Pierre Bourdieu. Secondly, there will be a brief introduction to concepts of space and place and the relationship to structural authority from the work of Michel de Certeau. Thirdly, I give an overview of muted group theory.

2.2 Diaspora

In the first issue of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies,* an article by William Safran opens the discourse on the subject of diaspora (Safran 1991). Citing the expansion of the concept from the ancient scattering of the Jews, the eleventh century Armenian diaspora is added. Six identifying factors are stated that include diaspora beyond political or religious reasons:

1. They or their ancestors moved from a centre.
2. They retained collective memories.
3. They believed they were not fully accepted by the host nation.
4. They believe their ancestral home to be their real home.
5. They believe they have a collective commitment to maintain and restore their homeland.
6. They relate personally or vicariously to their homeland (Safran 1991:83-89).

Robin Cohen adds additional details to Safran's criteria for diaspora (2008). Cohen provides possible backgrounds for diasporic movement along with ideas of relating to the homeland and the recreation of a new home amongst indigenous and co-ethnics in the host country while idealising the homeland. The comparison to the Jews appears to be the common denominator in the analyses on diaspora.

Cohen offers nine frequent features (2008:17):

1. Leaving an original homeland sometimes due to trauma, sometimes to two foreign regions.

2. Leaving a homeland for work.

3. A myth regarding the location, history, suffering and achievements of the homeland.

4. Idealization of the real or imagined home and a fantasy of its safety, wealth and security.

5. A group encouraged motivation to return home long term, even though visits back are infrequent.

6. Strong ethnic bonds over time, founded on a shared history, and the passing on of cultural and religious practices.

7. Possibility of a difficult relationship with the host country, due to concerns of lack of acceptance or another traumatic event.

8. A shared responsibility and feelings of empathy for other co-ethnics in other nations.

9. The possibility of creating an original and gratifying new life in the host country.

Cohen also introduces 'qualifying adjectives' to further categorise the diaspora. By applying the adjectives, victim, labour, imperial, trade and deterritorialized, the term diaspora begins to take on a variety of issues concerning the origin and purpose of the movement of people groups (2008:61). Cohen and Safran show the influence of ancient Jewish and Armenian diaspora hence locations and strong religious distinctions appear to be important factors. They point out the relationships with the host nation as being a problem. The ideas of negotiating between host and diaspora cultures begin to gather more relevance. This is further explored through additional research focusing on the manner of movement and continued engagement between the host and the diaspora in later studies.

2.2.1 Changes in the Understanding of Diaspora as Ideological Scattering

While acknowledging the work of Cohen and Safran, Stéphane Dufoix conveys alternative perspectives on diaspora research. The criteria provided by Safran and Cohen suggest a linear timeline that concludes with the diaspora finally accepting a state of dissatisfaction with their geographical dislocation. Dufoix moves away from the structured framework into which all diasporas are grouped according to the idea that people are identified through a categorisation or 'typology' based on their changing experiences. He offers four 'modes' that suggest a process rather than a fixed framework in which diaspora discussions become more flexible (2003:xv). Dufoix's 'modes' address the changing statuses of diaspora not just as geographical movement but also as changes in ideology:

1. Centroperipheral mode, where the emigrant collective is strongly connected to the homeland through embassies, consulates and cultural centres as well as kin. The group has connections with others in the same group but not across other groups.

2. Enclaved mode, where the collective engages in beliefs with those of the same origin but do not experience the same strong connections with the homeland. This might be described as a 'ghetto' as the collective residential community becomes part of the local urban landscape.

3. Atopic mode, where the origin is acknowledged, but not in the sense of claiming a territory. There is a connection with other emigrant communities.

4. Antagonistic mode, where collectives recruit other analogous groups to join them to influence the homeland.

(adapted from Dufoix 2003:xv)

Dufoix's modes offer flexibility in the process of diaspora, where the diaspora groups are more involved in their cultural choices rather than external categorisation. Movement in between the modes is less linear and suggests that the diasporas are more able to negotiate some of their choices of cultural change and perhaps articulate them from their perspective.

Homi Bhabha (1994) refutes the binary of belonging by contesting fixed cultural boundaries that have been created and maintained from a particularly colonial perspective. By changing the frame of reference, Bhabha argues that the boundary is in reality a location of a new beginning released from the confinement of binary belonging. Using this analogy in the context of diaspora theory, it is possible to approach the study beyond locational movement as the boundary of diasporic change. Diaspora theory

becomes less confined to geographical location. Cultural dimensions broaden the possibility of diverse applications of the theory.

Arjun Appadurai (1990) explores the global cultural flows through unconventional networks that bypass national and international political, economic, and legal regulating systems. He references five 'scapes' that are characterised by ethnos, finance, technology, ideology, and media. These adaptable yet distinct categories create opportunities of access and mobility of resources through flexible and overlapping relationship networks. Transnational networks grow in saliency in the diaspora contexts. The idea of transnational networks connecting people groups not only by the country and culture of origin, but also by connecting through networks that circumnavigate the world, thus challenging traditional structures by finding subtle gaps in international laws and politics.

By applying Bhabha's perspective of alternate views from a different range of viewpoints and Appadurai's observation of networks, the concept of diaspora can clearly be released from the limitations of diaspora discussion as solely geographical movements. Transnational networks are far more mobile as advances in communication and travel become increasingly available.

2.2.2 Diaspora Voices in the British Context

The discussions of traditional concepts of geographical diaspora and ideological diasporas are highly evident in Britain through historical connections during colonialism and postcolonialism. Stuart Hall (1994) argues that definitions of diaspora depend upon the history, culture and power of those articulating and accepting traditional definitions. As a cultural theorist, Hall presents the idea of a multiplicity of cultural identities and continuous hybridizing that result in a constant state of displacement of the postcolonial diaspora.

For Hall (1994) as an African Caribbean living in Britain, the focus on geographical movement displaces the relevance of relational identity. He refers to positioning as two ways of looking at two types of diaspora cultural identity. Firstly, the shared culture of the collective, where one is part of the whole that jointly shares common cultural experiences and history. For the diaspora from the former colonies, this is not the same as the Judeo-Christian shared history of the Jews and the Armenians that is explicit and implicit in diaspora typologies. Secondly, Hall argues that the diaspora cultural identity can be described as 'aporia,' in the sense that the conflict of identity is never resolved.

The identity conflict is in a constant form of flux due to what Hall argues is the colonial experience that constructs an inferior identity, and also constantly identifies the diaspora from the former colonies as the 'other'.

Hall's thoughts on diaspora challenge Safran and Cohen's common features and identifying factors, not only because the influence of colonization can never be undone, but also because the former colonies do not have a common religious history with the Jews and Armenians. In addition, the concern for land and geographical location is one that can never be satisfactorily resolved for those from the former colonies.

Paul Gilroy (1993) acknowledges the multiplicity of identities but postulates that the actual movement of the diaspora people groups disrupts culture based on location. Gilroy is less connected to the idea of land-based self-identity or identification. He offers a flexible/fluid image of diaspora. By using the metaphor of a ship, he sees micro-cultural and micro-political systems in motion. These systems began upon separation from the homeland. During transit individuals gathered to produce their own groups and created structured support systems. The relationships continued from their shared experiences of travel and during the early periods of living in the host country. Despite being strangers in the homeland, they maintain voluntary kin relationships (Lal 2007). Gilroy also considers the ships as being carriers of new ideas where insiders and outsiders meet and merge. The concept of a victim diaspora does not entirely grasp the benefit of double consciousness as the idea of multiple simultaneous belongings.

Gilroy (1993) argues that these transnational 'routes' of diaspora have more relevance than 'roots' in terms of degree of connection to the location of origin. (1993:133) The physical movement of crossing geographical boundaries creates cultural fluidity through new connections that began micro-cultural systems during their journey. The transitory nature of routes therefore offers advantages over a rooted geographical location in terms of increasing network connections.

Gilroy rejects the idea of immovable ethnic rootedness and replaces it with transnational double consciousness that acknowledges the plurality of ethnic and cultural awareness. With diaspora being defined as more flexible and fluid, there is a sense of the blurring of the lines between homogenous, marginal and liminal self-producing cultures. This broadens the idea of diaspora but simultaneously challenges precise and stable definitions, especially beyond the second generation. Both Hall and Gilroy draw on their Afro-Caribbean contexts to contribute to ideas of transnational and transcultural identities.

While the Indians from South Asia arrived in Britain around the same time as the people from the Caribbean, there are distinct differences in and amongst diaspora groups from the former British colonies. Those from the Caribbean shared the same Christian religion as the indigenous British. They viewed their arrival to Britain as going home to the motherland. Their adjustment was perhaps more difficult than the Indians in that they were identified as outsiders based upon their arrival from the former colonies. The Indians were aware of their religious identity clearly defined as non-Christian and their newly independent national identity as Indians. As such they were perhaps more cognizant of their difference from the British community.

Steven Vertovec looks at the fluidity of cultural changes through the Hindu diaspora. He argues that it is an error to research Hindu diasporic culture through an archetype situated in India (2000). British Gujarati Hinduism has developed beyond the country of origin. The British Gujarati form of Hinduism has been cultivated in Britain and has been influenced through the twice migrant Gujarati who came via East Africa. In that sense, it is a religion that is in itself a dispersed ideology that blends religio-cultural traditions when distanced from the country of origin (Vertovec 2000).

The ideological and cultural impact of religions in diaspora is evident in James Clifford's discussion (1997). He sees diaspora culture as a mobile mutual exchange of symbols and practices. While moving from location to location, people groups take on different aspects of a culture and leave other aspects of their culture and ideology behind. Similar to Gilroy's idea of adjustment based on necessity, religio-cultural practices are not fixed within a location nor necessarily creating an alternate culture but are subject to an ongoing movement.

Hall and Gilroy as diaspora theorists speaking from their perspectives suggest the recognition of the need for different approaches to cultural authorities. This suggests that the expansion of the term diaspora is being stretched to incorporate the marginalised whether intentional or otherwise, at several layers of 'othering'. The diaspora discourse cannot be reduced to the binary of oppressor and oppressed or the insider and the outsider or the foreigner and the native. The sense of belonging and 'othering' is multidimensional and varies in different situations. In this sense, maybe unintentionally, previous frameworks become limiting and reinforce inclusion and exclusion.

2.2.3 Diaspora as Social Identity

Rogers Brubaker (2005) argues that the qualifying factors of what constitutes diaspora continue to expand. The problem of the term losing all meaning is compounded by it being appropriated through all areas of studies in humanities and social science as well as being used in the media and popular culture.

Where the definitions were once centred on Jewish history, according to Brubaker, the term now is a broad platform of articulation for virtually any minority discourse. He suggests three 'core elements' in applying the term. None of these are restricted to geographical location:

1. Dispersion - Any kind of forced or traumatic dispersion.
2. Homeland Orientation - Oriented to a single cultural recreatable connection.
3. Boundary Maintenance - Distinctive without rejecting the 'other'.

(Brubaker 2005)

These core elements serve as anchors rather than definitions. Dispersed groups cross state borders but also within the borders there may be movement from one ethnic enclave to another. Where similar familiar cultural practices are not prevalent, there may also be movement from one ideological enclave to another.

Safran and Cohen rely heavily on homeland orientation, this gradually diminishes beyond the second generation and future generations. Clifford and Gilroy indicate far more interest in a continuous negotiating of cultural exchange that retains aspects of homeland orientation in terms of cultural practices. Retaining some of the distinct differences, but simultaneously adjusting to variances with diverse cultures and locations, results in changes in practices. Homeland orientation is thus the negotiating of the balance of keeping the boundaries, or allowing them to erode through assimilation.

2.2.4 The Indian Context

The Indian diaspora share many common characteristics of other diaspora groups. Brij V. Lal (2006) and others provide a history of the Indian diaspora. In doing so they give the historical background to the Indian diaspora in the colonial and postcolonial eras. Lal notes that the presence of Indians in Britain went from being 'miniscule, temporary and peripheral' during the colonial era to 'substantial, permanent and central' in the postcolonial era. The host countries and India have increased their interest in defining and studying the Indian diaspora for social, economic, and political reasons (2006:336).

Clarke, Peach and Vertovec (1990) offer four characteristics in relation to the Indian diaspora:

1. Migration processes and factors of settlement: type of migration, ties with South Asia, economic activity, geography of settlement, and infrastructure of host country.

2. Cultural composition, religion, language, region of origin, caste, degree of cultural homogenization.

3. Social structure, extent of racial pluralism, class composition, institutionalized racism, involvement in politics.

4. Community development, organizations for political, religious, cultural engagement (1990:5).

Vertovec further explores three meanings of diaspora as '"diaspora" as *social form*, "diaspora" as *type of consciousness* and "diaspora" *as mode of cultural production*' (2000:142) (Emphases by author). These meanings along with listed focus points draw attention to the relational and community aspects of the diaspora in general. However, there are some distinctions in the Indian context as they include other South Asians.

'Social form' refers to social relationships resulting from geographical and historical ties (Vertovec 2000:142). These relationships help to build and sustain certain ways of life that impact those in the homeland and establish new social relationships for second generation in the host land. Most specifically, historically Indian migration balanced the separation from immediate family with the prospect of broadening networks for trade.

'Type of consciousness' relates to the balance of being a part of life in the homeland and host land at the same time. The consciousness of family *dharmic* responsibility is the religious duty that is especially relevant during the student and homeowner stages. During these stages, the acquisition of skills and material resources that contribute to success in the present and the future has great relevance in diaspora.

Transnational double consciousness is described as a survival skill as a result of being excluded and marginalized. The 'mode of cultural production' takes double consciousness into consideration so that despite aspects of marginalization or exclusion, the connection with the host country maintains ties of inclusion and belonging (Vertovec 2000:142). The process of cultural production and exchange might be limited to the replacement of cultural objects between the homeland and the host land. They might opt for gradual additions to religio-cultural practices that broaden religious beliefs through what Vertovec refers to as '*vis à vis* dynamics' with Christianity (2000:106). The four

characteristics and the subsequent three meanings could thus be applied to the diaspora of Indian ideologies.

The Indian diaspora partially fits the criteria of Safran's six identifying factors of the diaspora. Additionally, the Indian diaspora can be seen in relation to Cohen's frequent features. While these offer some points of similarity, they are based on the Jewish and Armenian diasporas. This can limit the understanding of the Indian diaspora as the religious connections of ties to the homeland have significantly different purposes.

The dislocation from the geographical location for Jews is based on the Old Testament. This ideological and historical point of reference is not relevant to the Indian diaspora as it is limited by Judeo-Christian perspectives. The religious connection for the Indian diaspora is related to the expression of '*dharma*', the religious duty of the Hindus, and a part of South Asian culture. The acquisition of wealth for the betterment of the wider family, the future generations, and reincarnations is part of the motivation of migration. The taboo of crossing the '*kala pani*[1] is overcome by the importance of '*dharma*'. In this respect the diaspora experience is seen as an opportunity.

Safran (1991) draws on the example of the Parsi and Sindhi movements that were characterised by trauma and persecution thus making the connection with the traditional definition of diaspora based on the Jewish and Armenian contexts. The Parsi and Sindhi experiences bear some similarities to the restrictive, persecuted position experienced by religious minorities within India, many of whom are converts to Christianity.

Safran also points out the British organised indentured labourer migration to Fiji, but he does not discuss the indentured labourers moving to East Africa or the postcolonial Indian diaspora to Britain. Cohen's 'qualifying adjectives' of victim, labour, imperial, trade and deterritorialized diaspora could be applied to the postcolonial Indian diaspora from India and East Africa (2008:61). Safran similarly omits the postcolonial Indian diaspora. The postcolonial twice diaspora and subsequent generations from East Africa relate to multiple diaspora categories such as labour, victim, and deterritorialized.

The Indians developed their own systems for cultural formation prior to arrival in the host land. Their ability to build networks during the time of transportation where the passengers are neither in their homeland or host land, shows the changes in the importance of ritual practices of pure and impure. Considering the religious and political importance

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[1] *Kala pani* in literal translation is black water and refers to the ocean.

of caste purity, this was another system that was replaced by voluntary kin relationships created in transit referred to as *'jahājibhai'* or ship brothers (Lal 2006).

In the article, 'The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora', Mishra (1996) separates the Indian diaspora into the colonial 'exclusive' and the postcolonial 'border'. These do not run in a continuous historical line. They are both connected to the British Empire and the use of Indian labour. The term 'exclusive' is used as these Indians were excluded from India and they had no way to return. The diaspora Indians were excluded from relationships in the homeland and the host land. While maintaining the idea of return even when this became possible, they rejected it. By contrast relationships in the 'border' diaspora context is made possible by globalization, technology and the greater ability for relationship networks to manipulate the power of the nation state.

Mishra (1996) classifies diaspora as: "Any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialized nation-state, as a group that lives in displacement" (1996:245). By contrast, Clifford would argue that the Indian diaspora successfully recreate their own culture in multiple locations (Clifford 1994). Their history of twice diaspora is within their own memory. Mishra speaks of the question that may be on the subconscious of most Indian diaspora in the West[2] arising from their memories of leaving African countries during decolonization. "What do we do with them now?" (1996:245).

The question relates to the seventh of Cohen's nine common features of diaspora (2008:17). The lack of acceptance in the host country for the twice diaspora was experienced in the East African and British contexts. Hence the idea of being victims as a diaspora from East Africa and because of diaspora to Britain. The multiple diasporic dislocations appear to create adaptable social networks comparable to the kind of relational, cultural and ideological flexibility of the voluntary kin culture during transit. However, as twice migrant and part of victim categories there are certain flexibilities that vary from the Gujarati who came directly from India.

Karen Leonard defines the diaspora as "the term used loosely for sets of immigrants abroad and their descendants" (2017:271; Chatterji & Washbrook 2013). Leonard argues that often the term 'real Indians' is reserved for those who are 'more or less remaining

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[2] Some of the 'twice diaspora' from East Africa relocated to North America through network connections. In some cases, this included brief periods of residency in India and/or Britain before settling in North America (Poros 2011).

true to their traditions and homeland communities' (2017:271). This observation suggests that rituals and relationships provide a measure of understanding of the Indian identity.

Amba Pande's measure of 'Indianness' is through their retention of linguistic and religio-cultural practises. In defining the diaspora, she posits a simple definition as 'transnational communities wedded to host lands and profoundly connected to homelands' (2003:58). She then offers four additional elements: firstly, crossing borders indicating long term settlement in one or more countries; secondly, creating a niche for themselves in society and community; thirdly, maintaining cultural consciousness through recreated space or involvement through social, political and economic networks and finally, constructing a multi-local fluid identity (2003:59-60). Pande argues that while the Indian diaspora are from all over India representing a plurality of society and having migrated through different phases and patterns, they acknowledge their Indian origin. In order to qualify the remark, she suggests definitions of the Indian diaspora be measured by 'Indianness' alongside her four additional elements. Differing measures of 'Indianness' among the Indian diaspora are demonstrated by varying amounts of religio-cultural interaction with India and Indians.

By applying Pande's idea of 'Indianness' and by connecting Indian diasporas to the second of Pande's diaspora elements, my research suggests the Indian diasporic ability allows and encourages flexible changes of religio-cultural identities within Hinduism. Furthermore, the third and fourth elements include 'recreated spaces' and multi local identities, giving rise to cultural hybridity in alternative and overlapping networks of belonging and a multiplicity of identities in a variety of locations.

The Indian diaspora experience of the latter part of the twentieth century and beyond has less and less in common with the traditional diaspora frameworks. The most relevant aspect of the Indian diaspora experience goes beyond Cohen's and Safran's typologies and definitions of the diversity of the diaspora. Lal notes the history of the Indian diaspora as historically relatively insignificant prior to the postcolonial second and third phases. He defines them as substantial and permanent. Vertovec, after identifying common traits in many diaspora groups, offers three significant connotations as social form, mode of production and type of consciousness as specifically significant to Indian diaspora relationship networks.

Mishra discusses two different Indian diaspora groups using the terms border and exclusive both of which rely heavily on relationships to negotiate networks. By comparison, Leonard and Pande acknowledge that connection to the country of origin is

evident by the retention of language and customs that are directly connected to India. Arguably, Leonard and Pande's specific characterisations of the Indian context provide possibilities for the Indian diaspora to interweave localised cultural Hinduism as practised by the British Gujarati into cultural Christianity as practised by British Evangelical Christians which leads to increased understanding based on personal interactions.

2.3 Conversion

In this section, I will discuss the literature surrounding religious conversion. I will begin by looking at the patterns of conversion then look specifically at the Evangelical Christian context before moving to conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. I will then look at the Evangelical Christian conversion literature as it applies to the BGC context.

Lewis Rambo defines conversion as a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations and orientations. He references seven stages of conversions as context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequence (1995:17). These are offered as a framework that may be spiral rather than linear, but nevertheless common in the religions that encourage proselytism. He discusses three versions of conversion which include a transition from absence of any faith system to commitment to a specific faith system, from one religion to a completely different religion and from one orientation within a religion to another within the same religion (1995:2).

Rambo states, "conversion is turning from and to new religious groups, ways of life, systems of belief and modes of relating to a deity or the nature of reality" (1995:3). He references the 'dynamic force field' and lists the various institutions within a culture that contribute to the conversion process (1995:5). This relates to the ongoing active aspect of ideological changes that occur in the different ways of interacting with cultural symbols.

The anthropologist, Anthony Wallace, refers to conversion as revitalisation (1956:265). He offers five phases that overlap with Rambo's stages. Wallace's (initial) 'steady state' is similar to Rambo's 'context'. Wallace's 'increased individual state' and 'cultural distortion' may be connected to Rambo's stages of 'crisis', 'quest' 'encounter' and 'interaction' (1995:17). Wallace's 'revitalization' and (final) 'steady state' relate to Rambo's commitment and consequence phases (1956:265). Wallace also provides sub-stages that occur in revitalization that go further into the conversion process.

Henri Gooren (2007) examines the 'conversion career' as a process through stages that occur across time. He separates the stages by pre-affiliation, affiliation, conversion, confession and disaffiliation (2007:52-71). Each stage is part of the turning from one set of religious beliefs to another. Gooren looks at the networks of relationships, the life cycle of the conversion experience, the life history of the converts and the non-converts associated with the individual. The new associations with individuals and their respective networks begin to bring in different ideas that contribute to the conversion journey or 'career' (2007).

The changing beliefs do not necessarily have a specific connection to Christian doctrine until the confession and disaffiliation stages. The next section will discuss some specifics of Evangelical Christian conversion by providing a very brief outline of the basis of their beliefs. It will also offer some critique of Evangelical Christian conversion processes.

2.3.1 Conversion in Evangelical Christianity

The conversion aspect is an essential feature of Evangelical Christianity that reveals the initial adoption of the new religious belief system. Based on the historical conversion detailed in the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, conversion is distinguished as, 'a radical change of perspective or transformation in one's outlook. "'New birth,' 'new creation,' and 'born from above' (or 'born again') also make up the vocabulary of NT conversion" (David Kling 2014:598). Kling further notes that New Testament Christian conversion illustrates immediate and gradual conversion.

J.C. Soper traces the origins of current Evangelicalism to the 1730s with the conversion of John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. As a branch of Protestantism, Evangelicalism is discussed by Soper using 'social movement theory' with a strong commitment to societal improvement through involvement in abolitionism, education and healthcare (1994).

As discussed in section 1.6 of the previous chapter, Evangelical ideology and group formation are defined by the emphasis on conversion. In addition, the Bible is considered the inspired and infallible word of God and the conviction that all converts' daily life decisions and actions arise from the religious conversion experience. However, in addition, Evangelical habitus is influenced by narrative and interest group literature (Soper 1994).

Richard Harries discusses the identity of the Evangelical Christian. He references Bebbington's quadrilateral of conversion, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism that define Evangelical beliefs. The key concepts are firstly, conversion that must be evidenced through a changed life. Secondly, activism is required as a deliberate effort to church service and with emphasis on evangelism. Thirdly, biblicism as the acknowledgement of the Bible as the sacred text. Fourthly and finally, crucicentrism as the belief in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus (2008).

The four concepts must be addressed through theological and sociological perspectives. Salvation and conversion are concurrent. Donald Dayton suggests the change in life that is considered to be effective immediately is referred to as 'convertive piety' (Harries 2008). The instant reverence and obligation to God as a result of conversion thus connects to biblicism. The interaction with the Bible is as God's Word and will. The most relevant aspect of biblicism is the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ's birth, death, and resurrection.

Bebbington's quadrilateral and Soper's definitions of conversion to Evangelical Christianity both suggest a linear process of conversion. There is a sense of cyclical maturity that is evident in the Evangelical Statement of Faith,[3] but there are clear areas of individual's personal interpretation and adaptation. Conversion might then be considered a progressive journey that draws upon sociological and theological perspectives. Conversion then is achieved by means of a personal relationship with God through Jesus based on his crucifixion and resurrection. The emphases are upon the individualised journey of salvation based upon understanding conversion, engaging in activism, interpreting the Bible and believing in the crucifixion.

Charles Kraft describes living as a convert as 'a lifelong process consisting of continuous divine-human interactions and a continuing series of human decisions' (1979:403). Kraft also offers five continued practices of the convert's life that overlap with the first and second points of Bebbington's quadrilateral. Bebbington's third and fourth points of biblicism and crucicentrism are connected to Kraft's ideas of altering decision making based upon "people of God teaching people of God" (1979:403).

Kraft acknowledges an interesting point of enculturation of the Christian convert. He uses the term 'cultural conversion' to describe the convert's experience that is based upon mimicking the pattern of the one who initiated the conversion. If the convert strongly connects with the culture of the initiators (missionaries), the signs of her

[3] See the section British Evangelical Christian Habitus in Chapter 1.

enculturation into the new belief system are equated with her ability to use the initiators language and culture. 'Cultural conversion' is used to describe an obstacle created by missionaries who equate the convert's use of Western language and culture as signs of progress in the new belief system.

Susan Harding's perspective of Christian conversion relies upon language to direct the individual from pre-affiliation with Evangelical Christians, to affiliation with them, to identifying with them, converting to Christianity and finally disassociating with previous religious identity. Harding argues that being willing to listen to the Evangelical Christian narrative signals the beginning of the conversion process (1987:168). Her three points of conversion are specific to the Evangelical Christian context.

According to Harding, the conversion process begins with listening to an Evangelical Christian to enable the hearer to relate to someone else's conversion resulting in giving up personal unbelief. Secondly, accepting the new belief as a change at the core of self-identity and thus directing all actions in personal and private life. Thirdly, to join in a new narrative tradition where religious self-identity is strengthened by narrating the personal pre-conversion life, the conversion event and the ongoing witness to the truth of Evangelical Christianity.

Beyond the language and speech of Christian conversion, there is also the change in behaviour. Peter Stromberg (1990) discussing Christian conversion states "Change does not occur once and for all, but rather narrative must be recreated" (1990:43). The convert still has the same conflicts of life but, their new belief system offers different routes of resolution. Rather than a singular historical event, conversion is "an ongoing practice that allows one to act in a consistent manner" (1990:43). Conversion is a change in practice that might be marked by a historical event as a beginning. It is thus not limited to what an individual chooses to believe but also embraces what she might choose to do based on the new self-identity as Christian.

The conversion and subsequent change in behaviour of one individual within a family is a cause of concern as it is often accompanied by role exit, as the convert chooses to make changes in behavioural patterns that affect other members of the family. While this refers to individuals moving from traditional churches to new religious movements or cults, role exit is an issue in the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. As British Gujarati converts withdraw from family roles, religio-cultural events, and make independent decisions, the breakdown in societal networks becomes apparent in the

British Gujarati community. With this in mind, I turn now to the specifics of the literature concerning Hindu to Christian conversion.

2.3.2 Conversion from Hinduism to Christianity

Issues of Hindu conversion to Christianity have been a subject of discussion since the colonial era. Concerns of proselytism by Islam and Christianity are seen as political and collective rather than personal. The National Christian Council in India (NCC) makes a distinction between conversion and proselytism: "The proselyte may have no inner change" (Sharma 2014:604). The concern is that proselytes are looking for external (physical) benefits of conversion out of selfish motives. These may be in terms of education, medical care, or to reject endogamy. Alternatively, a true conversion is believed to be characterised by "spiritual illumination, reconciliation and peace" (Sharma 2014:604).

Arguably Gandhiji, when questioned on Hindu conversion to Christianity stated, "If a person wants to believe in the Bible let him say so, but why should he discard his own religion?" (Gandhi 1950:230). In the case of Hindu conversion to Christianity, it would appear from Gandhiji's statement that reconciliation and peace with God does not come with a binary approach to religio-cultural roles, belonging or practices. Gauri Viswanathan argues that collective conversion, (which is perhaps more what the NCC call proselytism than individual spiritual enlightenment) and individual conversion have similar impacts (1998:75). Whether collective conversion reconstructs the shape of the nation, or the individual convert rejects personal or customary principles, a prevalent issue of the Christian conversion of Hindus is that it divides communities and thus nations.

Xavier Gravend-Tirole (2014) notes that while conversion may be an attempt to reconstruct a group identity and affect social mobility for the lower castes, more often they find that Indian social hierarchy persists even among Christians. As the theology of Indian Christianity was created by and for the elite minority of Hindus, it draws from their traditions in order to protect their position in society.

Hinduism is strongly connected to India. While it is not a religion that seeks to convert others, it is a religion that continues to grow and change. The idea of an individual deciding to reject religio-cultural practices without considering the impact on others is incomprehensible (Mahadevan 1956). Sri Ramakrishna (1834-1886) sought spiritual

insight by his research of Islam and Christianity and concluded that there were no significant differences between Hinduism and the monotheistic faiths. Not only did he deem conversion as a waste of time but also changing one religion for another might even be worse as it dissolves the strong cultural significance to one's ancestral connections (Sharpe 1985). The value of social cohesion is paramount in Hinduism as revealed in reaction of Narayan Tilak, a Brahmin convert to Christianity in the mid-nineteenth century.

Tilak was a well-known scholar, nationalist and poet who was educated in India (Richard 1998). His spiritual quest was along traditional Hindu social lines. His approach to Christianity was to be part of a genuine Indian Church along Indian lines. The loss of his job, being reduced to poverty, the threat on his life, legal proceedings and the forfeiture of his family, reveal the degree to which even in pre-Gandhian times, the fervour with which Hindus opposed conversion.

At one end of the spectrum, there is the extreme Hindu aggressive reaction to the conversion of Tilak in the nineteenth century that coincides with the contemporary beliefs of Hindutva who work toward bringing converts back to Hinduism. At the other end of the spectrum is Gandhi's approach to religious tolerance in the twentieth century. However, Gandhi does concede that an individual who could better understand God through an alternate religion should be free to do so (Smith 1963:168). This may reveal the difference in the attitudes toward conversion. Gandhi's approach is evident in the statement made by Arvind Sharma, "The prevailing ethos of modern Hinduism is that the goal of interfaith action is not to convert people but to help them live their faith more fully" (Sharma 2014:433). While there is a difference between Christian interfaith dialogue and evangelism, many British Gujarati are more familiar with historic characterisation of Evangelical Christianity.

As a Hindu migrant living in the West, Sharma offers an academic approach to conversion that may have more application in the West than in India. Vishwanathan argues that conversion amongst the poorest communities in India awakens an awareness of the discriminatory practices that oppress and are part of the cause and entrapment of poverty (1998:176). Conversion thus challenges the dual meanings of Hinduism in India: Hinduism as culture which imparts cultural essence to the territorial cum political aspect of the state, and Hinduism as a religion which denotes its national way of life (Varshney 1993:240). It appears that individual Christian conversion of a Hindu cannot adequately relate to or replace Hindu cultural and community-oriented activities that connect to

religious self-identity and identification in geographical and societal arenas. This suggests that despite Tilak's conversion in the mid-nineteenth century and over seventy years since India's independence as a secular state, attitudes in literature toward conversion from Hinduism go far beyond the impact of the choice of the individual.

2.3.3 Christian Conversion of the Gujarati

In Gujarat, there have been small collective conversions amongst extremely impoverished and marginalised Dalit and Bhil communities during the 1990s and early 2000s. Conversion amongst the broader Gujarati is infrequent hence literature is rare. The two individual Christian conversions of privileged Gujarati in India are Manilal C. Parekh (1885-1967) and Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai Patel (1895-1967).

Manilal was given a copy of 'The Imitation of Christ'[4] by a friend. He became a follower of Keshab Chandra Sen, a Hindu philosopher who attempted social reform in India through Christian theology. Manilal joined the Anglican church but was dissatisfied by what he perceived as attitudes that did not value Hindu culture or India. He clearly stated his opinion on Hindu conversion to Christianity in an article for the National Christian Council Review:

> It has come to mean absolute severance from one's own community, from one's own birth and kin, from one's national, cultural and even spiritual heritage, all of which are very often nearer to the Spirit of Christ than the so-called Christendom of the Christian community in India. (Roy 2009:166)

He visited America twice and was further disillusioned at the lack of depth of the Christian belief as he perceived Hindus following Biblical principles far more closely than those who professed Christianity. As a consequence, he was denounced by the Christian community. Manilal eventually moved to the belief that all religions held truth. In the final years of his life, he attended the Swaminarayan *mandir*[5] (Boyd 1974; Roy 2009). The lack of an Indian cultural context for Gujarati Christian Converts became the most significant obstacle for Parekh.

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[4] The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis was originally written in the fifteenth century.

[5] See section on British Gujarati Practices in Chapter 1.

Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai Patel was a teacher of physics at Gujarat University and was very knowledgeable in Hindu religious philosophy. During his student years, he became committed to following the teachings of Christ and referred to his way of life as *Khristadvaita,* otherwise known as Christ non-dualism (Boyd 1977). While he was determined to avoid syncretism by ceasing involvement in the worship of Hindu deities, he applied his fluency with religious terminology in Gujarati, Hindi and Sanskrit terminology to the context of his Christian expression.

Using the literary style of the *Bhagavadagita*, Patel published *Sri Hriday Gita.*[6] The book is based on the New Testament with chapters focusing on the way of Christ. With a bachelor's degree in divinity, he possessed sufficient knowledge to use the Greek New Testament. He also had access to three English versions of the Bible, and the 1861 and 1952 versions of the Gujarati Bible. However, he chose to interpret the New Testament verses using the vocabulary that pertained to his Hindu religio-cultural experience.

Both Parekh and Patel maintained family connections. Unlike Parekh, Patel was able to combine and contextualize his interpretation of his conversion experience despite being overwhelmed by the cultural currents of Hindu and Christian identities of his time. Navigating the cultural currents of Christian conversion is evident in the British Gujarati Conversion literature.

British Gujarati Christian Conversion

While the conversion literature is of a popular rather than academic standard, it may be seen to serve two purposes. Firstly, following Gooren's definition of the tradition of the Evangelical 'conversion career' of the four stages of pre affiliation, affiliation, conversion, confession and disaffiliation (2007:862), published conversion stories capture the cultural along with the conversion narratives of disaffiliation. Secondly, the stories illustrate Harding's observation that listening to the argument for conversion is the beginning of the conversion journey. The published narratives of Gujarati Converts serve as a conversion tool as well as cultural evidence of Christian influence on the British Gujarati diaspora. This is evident in Priti Bhakt's published conversion story as she

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[6] *Sri Hriday Gita* means Song of the Heart.

recounts, "A man called Milan[7] came to share his testimony with the Sangat here. As I sat and listened, I knew I wanted exactly what he had" (2019:83).

Similar to Priti Bhakt, a number of other participants in my research have published their conversion narratives. The language of conversion is based on individual choice to convert. Rick recalls his conversion interest as, "I came to see my own moral failures; why my best wasn't good enough" (Tice & Jones 2019:55).

Likewise, Manoj Raithatha discussing his conversion experience states, "I should have been standing in front of God in judgement, and yet in accepting Jesus as my saviour I was experiencing not judgement but forgiveness" (2015:122). Proof of the conversion process was through a change in narrative of the past, present and future.

Of the seven stages of conversion as defined by Lewis Rambo (1993:17), the 'commitment stage' is marked as an observable event that is 'dramatized and commemorated' in a public manner by the convert. This furthers the polarised aspect of the movement from British Gujarati Hindu practices to Evangelical Christianity. An individual convert's publicly presented testimonials of their conversion journey may be at the expense of the good of the collective. This is evident in the popular publications of narratives of conversion, where reference is made to individual commitment to a new religious self-identity and issues of family adjustment may not necessarily be addressed.

Published individual conversion narratives bear some similarities to each other in that the decision to convert was individual rather than collective. Furthermore, the conversion of the individual brought varying amounts of separation from the family and community. Throughout the convert's public narratives of their conversion experiences there is a clear movement away from the traditions that hold family and community together. Within the church, difficult experiences and dramatic narratives are respected and considered proof of the convert's commitment to Evangelical Christianity. The overwhelming collective criticism by British Gujarati of British Gujarati Christian conversion is rarely heard.

There is little published evidence of the value of Christian conversion of family members published by those Hindus who have experienced the conversion of a family member. During my research, I developed relationships with family members of the Converts. I discovered there was at least one person in the broader family who eventually saw the benefit of conversion in their family member.

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[7] Milan is a British Gujarati Christian.

2.4 Social Identity

In this section, I will give an overview of social identity. This will be followed by relating social identity in the diaspora and conversion concepts as they apply to my research.

Richard Jenkins (2004) begins his observations of the issues of identity by stating that identity is really identification. Identity is established by how we identify and know ourselves and how we identify and know others through perceptions of similarities and differences (2004:3). As these are likely to change, identity of self and others is based upon identification that has varying degrees of stability and flexibility. Identification enables us to engage each other meaningfully and with a measure of flexible assumption. Jenkins also holds that all identification occurs amongst the self and others, so identity is social or cultural. George Herbert Mead also proposes that our view of ourselves is based on how others see us (Jenkins 2004:19).

Shared aspects of identity can create interactional shortcuts to how we see ourselves (self-identity) and how we see others (identification). Frederik Barth's perspective on identification and collectivity focused on the frequency of interaction and negotiation through shared interests (Barth 1966; Jenkins 2004:178). A familiarity between individuals and groups or collectives fosters shortcuts based on assumptions created by past experiences. Henri Tajfel offers a further observation. He determined that group identity held a strong influence in the perception and choice of how those within a group treated those outside the group, even in arbitrary matters (1970).

Group belonging and activities bring shared aspects of behaviour and understanding. These are based not only on similarities and differences of language, dress, and gender, but also on third party or outside information (Jenkins 2004:7). While the group may hold certain ideas about its form and function, how the group is identified by those outside has a bearing on how individuals within see the group and themselves.

The way third party information informs the relevance of similarity and difference is located within an identifiable paradigm that is evidenced by George Simmel's observation. He states, "In fact the cultural history of mankind can be conceived as the history of the struggles and conciliatory attempts between the two" (1950:30). The struggles and conciliatory attempts between groups might then be occurring in the places of overlap or gaps where intergroup interactions with acceptable and opposing views contribute to self-identity and identification.

Jenkins acknowledges the gap in the issue of identification as 'knowing who's who and what's what' by further recognising that "Collective and individual identity are

typically understood as different kinds of phenomena and the relationship between unique individuality and shared collectivity tend to be unexamined and treated as axiomatic" (Jenkins 2004:15). Whether identification based on collective/group membership is by choice or incidental, or whether frequency of interaction creates identifiable traits, there are distinctions between the social identification by those who consider themselves insiders and offer subjective perspectives and by outsiders who offer objective perspectives.

Tajfel and Turner note that the more severe the intergroup conflict, the more it is likely that members will display group loyalty (2004:277). In terms of social identity relating to the diaspora of ideology, the British Gujarati diaspora identification has been impacted by the decolonisation of India and African nations. Despite the claims of *satyagraha* as Gandhi's passive resistance to British colonisation, decolonisation has degrees of impact on group identity and identification especially on the second and third phases of the Indian diaspora.

2.4.1 Social Identity in Diaspora

We move now to the issues of social identity within the experience of the diaspora as they relate to different groups in the host country. The issue of the boundaries amongst ethnic groups may be addressed using Barth's theory of interaction-based identity. Ethnic similarities and differences rather than being objective traits, are more likely to be significant in how those that intermingle with dissimilar ethnicities choose to interact with the differences (Barth 2000:12). Rather than ethnic identity being an expression of culture, it is form of social organisation. Where historically British South Asians were more likely to be Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Buddhist, the British Evangelicals were most commonly ethnically white Europeans. When the South Asians arrived in Britain, their difference of appearance, language and culture created difficulties in interactions between the British Evangelical Christians and the Indian diaspora communities. Barth further suggests that societal structures determine how the relevance of diaspora self-identity and identification is acted upon (2000:12).

The definitions or labels used for the social identity of the diaspora become more relevant in the way the diaspora interrelate with their own and other ethnic groups. The power of labelling as involuntary categorisation is highly significant in forming social identity. Labelling based on visual features may contribute to what Goffman recognises

as the possibility of identity being 'spoiled', thus fixing identification negatively. The stigma of identification may then contribute to the idea of the lost or confused identity of those that Jenkins sees as those 'who appear not to know who they are'. In terms of specific group belonging, self-identity and identification as a result of ideological diaspora, can effectively change behaviour in terms of roles, locational belonging and decision-making (2004:6).

Stuart Hall (1994) argues that the non-white diaspora was externally categorised within a postcolonial perspective. The lost or confused identity of the diasporic subject was stigmatised through labelling and categorisation. Stuart Hall's theory of the social identity of diaspora is that it is part of the strategy of resistance steeped in contradiction and doubt. This has given way to changes in the idea of the social identity of the diaspora. Arguably, perhaps the label of 'the lost and confused' may now be applied to those who attempt to objectively define the social identity of the diaspora (Jenkins 2004:6).

Tamsin Barber (2019) looks at diaspora in super diverse cities such as London. She suggests that identifications of Britain's largest visible diaspora groups of well organised African Caribbean and South Asian groups have given way to broader ethnic and cultural origins that have little connection with former postcolonial moorings (Barber 2019). The concept of super diversity avoids essentialism and moves away from the hyper visible labelling and categorisations based on colour and ethnicity to include multiple identifications. Thus, the boundaries of diaspora social identity by categorisation and labelling are continuously redrawn.

The social identity of the diaspora is more likely to be based on interaction and experiences with others rather than external categorisation. Self-identity and identification by others are not permanently fixed but more likely to be in the 'modes of diaspora' where gradual movement is connected to group identifications that overlap. The social identity of the diaspora incorporates several fluid identities that connect to multiple collectivities (Barber 2019).

2.4.2 Social Identity in Conversion

One aspect of the Evangelical conversion process is the evidence of a life change (Bebbington 1989). Richard Jenkins states, "Ideologies of spiritual salvation seek to understand and identify the essentials and the meaning of individual conscious existence no less than ideologies of personal growth" (2004:12).

The decision to embark on the journey of conversion is connected to dissatisfaction with current status, not only spiritual, but also physical and social, as well as position in community. Eirlys Joan Lucas (2017), writing on discrimination against the Dalit[8] community, cites the Law of Manu[9] as the basis upon which Indian society is structured. The Dalits are identified as positioned below the lowest part of the human body. In addition, the Law of Manu has differing perspectives of women, allowing for protection in abusive marriage, abandonment or widowhood (Olivelle 2004). At the same time the law requires a woman to seek the protection of her father, brother, and husband, whom she should worship as a god. The man is expected to exert control over the woman (Lucas 2017). This aspect of the law appears to have more prominence in current culture than ideas that consider women as equal to men.

Zara Bhateware and Tamsin Bradley (2013) note the motives for seeking to convert out of Hinduism are not limited to spiritual benefit. In their research into Dalits they discovered that conversion was used to develop or improve social identity. In that sense conversion of Dalits is culturally acceptable as a means of self-improvement and a collective recognition of injustices suffered as a result of the structure of society and thus challenges public identification.

Bhateware and Bradley note that Dalit conversion to Buddhism occured through the teaching of R. A. Ambedkar, whose conversion led to political activism to end caste discrimination. They cite Appadurai's (2004) idea of culture as having the potential to encourage people to affect change beyond their personal benefit, the issue of gender discrimination is also a motivating factor in conversion.

Virginia Lieson Brereton (1991) noted the narratives of the conversion stories of women in the twentieth century continued to emphasise the need for approval. Women identified with their pre-conversion dilemmas of feelings of entrapment in desperate lives and conversion was the means by which they could address poor self-image, moving past feelings of self-hatred, personal experiences of abandonment, and feeling unloved, unlovable and broken.

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[8] The Dalits were previously referred to as untouchables. They are considered outside of the scheduled castes as result of the belief in reincarnation that depends on the previous incarnations as the determining factor of the current social status.

[9] The Law of Manu formalised the Indian caste system. It uses the image of a man with the head representing the Brahmins (priests, academics and scientists). The chest and arms represent the Kshatriyas (rulers, warriors and ministers). The waist and thighs represent the Vaishyas (merchants, bankers, doctors and landowners. The legs and feet represent the Shudras, (artisans, farm workers, labourers and seamen).

Evangelical conversion of diaspora can be thought of as creating an ideological diaspora comparable to a geographical diaspora. The ideological shift that changes the symbolic system which organises social relations separates the Convert from their familiar identification by others. Their British Gujarati self-identity and group identification becomes displaced through the conversion process. Jenkins refers to 'identity crises' of "people who can't prove what they are, who appear not to know who they are, who are one thing one moment and something else the next" (2004:6).

Giddens argues that self-identity is a distinctly modern project within which individuals can reflectively construct a personal narrative which allows them to understand themselves as in control of their lives. This is evidenced in the published conversion narratives in Section 2.1.3 Gujarati Christian Conversion. The published texts also act as 'information from third parties' in that identification of the Convert, while not visibly different in appearance from the British Gujarati provides a possibility of helping to establish aspects of confused or lost identities.

Beyond the geographical movement, the collective sense of self within the British Gujarati family is challenged by the more individually defined sense of self of British Evangelicalism which results from British Gujarati Christian conversion. Thus, a personal deconstruction and reconstruction of the multiple scattered diaspora self must reach beyond Robin Cohen's categorisations of the traditional aspects of diaspora based on transnational movement and consider trans-ideological movement.

Jenkins discusses how identification is intrinsically and inescapably part of the passage of time through interaction (2004:26). Thus, the idea of continuity for the Convert's identity is reconstructed through the course of conversion as an ongoing process reflected in changes in family roles, belonging and personal decision-making. Part of the conversion experience is a verbally articulated confession of faith in the presence of others. This requires the narration of an experiential past as a deconstruction of inherited religious identity. The Converts are able to connect their presence in Britain to their individual choice of conversion and reconstruct their self-identity. By doing so, the Converts are able to connect themselves individually to society through their choice of collectives that are self-determined rather than inherited from a geographical location that is experientially distant.

Robert W. Hefner (1993) notes the interplay between identity, morality and politics in conversion. Christianisation promises reformulation and modernisation of social roles and cultural meanings that affirm the individual and offer hopes for the betterment of the

community. Hefner argues that religious reformation is associated with the making of the modern world. However, he also acknowledges the 'different cultural shadings in local settings' (1993:5). Hence the social identity and identification of the impact of conversion is likely to be more gradual, blurred and intricate.

Conversion is deviance in terms of social identity. It creates a new experience of self and others in a space during a particular time that did not previously exist. New boundaries are drawn that bring a secondary identification that reconfigures geopolitical limitations and complicates ethnic and national identification (Rambo & Farhadian 2014:2). The ideological shifting as Converts are drawn toward British Evangelical social interactions can be viewed as another layer of diasporic dislocation.

The constructivist approach to the social identity of the Convert applies through the three aspects of: individual conversion, family roles and institutional belonging. Jenkins states, "Ideologies of spiritual salvation seek to understand and identify the essentials and the meaning of individual conscious existence no less than ideologies of personal growth" (2004:12). As individuals occupy a space in a location, they create a meaningful understanding of themselves in terms of their self-identity and group identification.

The theorisation of identification must therefore accommodate the individual Convert inside and outside their British Gujarati community. The Convert represents difference when they are the only one within the British Evangelical church. Individual converts must know how to interact with British Evangelical Christians in their respective social fields, and also with British Gujarati individuals and groups in their particular social fields.

Furthermore, because the Converts are a very small minority, their collective practices will not become part of the British Evangelical social field beyond the small-scale scope of interactions between individuals; the presence of one or two Converts in a church cannot constitute engagement between British Evangelicalism and British Gujarati.

The broader British Evangelical Christian community must interact with the British Gujarati regardless of their religious identity and identification. The individual Convert in their British Gujarati social field represents difference, but the British Gujarati community alongside the British Evangelical community reflects similarity. Likewise, the Converts amongst the British Evangelical Christians represent similarity.

The following sections will introduce theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau relevant to the research. The section will close with an introduction to muted group theory and its relevance to my research.

2.5 Pierre Bourdieu

There are two aspects of Bourdieu's work which are pertinent to my research. These are the connection between theory and practice, and how they fit into social science research, and the conceptual terms of social field, capitals, agency, and habitus. Bourdieu refers to social fields as the location for a series of practices providing the entry point for understanding his theory.

Social fields represent spheres of action. There are many spheres of activity within any society, each with different principles that govern behaviour. Within the social field 'doxa' is an accepted, valued tradition central to the purpose of that field. The individual is referred to as an agent that interacts with other agents within same social field. The agent possesses and uses a level of agency to access what the particular social field offers.

The agent interacts in each field to increase particular types of capital. Various kinds of capital have ranges of values in different social fields:

1. Social capital may be defined by circles of friends with particular assets and skill sets that have differing amounts of value.

2. Cultural capital refers to an individual agent's knowledge, experience and connections that could include education or expertise in a particular field.

3. Economic capital would include property, finances and earning ability.

4. Symbolic capital is the honour and prestige specific to a particular field.

Capitals are the assets individual agents may garner through appropriate interaction within relevant social fields. Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created due to agency-based exchange in social fields.

The structure of the field is governed by 'habitus,' which Bourdieu refers to as "a structuring structure that organises practices and the perception of practices" (1984:170). As an organising principle, habitus is not immediately visible as it is not an individual act but a process. To a degree, it is invisible to those who collectively participate within the same structuring structure. Zander Navarro explains habitus in terms of individuals, "Through habitus, social practices are neither the mechanical imposition of structures nor the outcome of the free intentional pursuit of individuals" (2006:16).

While the individual may be unaware of their patterns as they are lost amongst the communal configurations, arguably once the individual is extracted from the 'mechanical imposition of structures' to a particular social field, the patterns become evident. Habitus is how society is deposited into a person in the form of 'lasting dispositions or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways that guide them (Wacquant 2005:316). In other words, habitus is made up of habits that have been created inadvertently and others which are the result of conscious and subconscious societal training. It is about 'being in the know' through perpetual patterns that can be gradually or unexpectedly altered.

Bourdieu also discusses symbolic violence as an imposition by dominance but not necessarily recognized as such (1977:196). The subtlety of symbolic violence is that it is exercised upon those within the social field who have less agency, thus, the victim is complicit in the perpetuation and reproduction (Bourdieu & Waquant 2002:167). Symbolic violence can become part of the habitus and part of the doxa unless some unforeseen situation provides a challenge.

The concept of symbolic violence may then be related to muted group theory as its power relies on the dominant position of agents within the social field. Those with less agency belong to the subordinate groups and through the power, actions and capitals of the dominant agents, are complicit in maintaining the habitus. Social fields are also locations where agents may exercise and experience symbolic violence, dominance, and muted group theory. Some social fields have agents with more significant influential capitals than others and therefore more capacity to dominate.

In the case of the Converts, they are minorities in two different social fields. The British Gujarati social field is a minority representation within the broader British social field. Within both British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian religio-cultural social fields, the Converts are less represented and vulnerable to symbolic violence.

2.6 Michel de Certeau

Michel de Certeau offers a theory of space and place and stipulates a method to address movement. Using the concept of physical movement, he provides the idea to explore the cultural aspects of power dynamics in belonging and movement. He argues that space is a geographical location that an individual occupies through physical existence. Space is somewhere one visits, passes through with little sense of long-term engagement. Place,

on the other hand, is governed by institutionalised power. Hence movement from place to place is through space:

> To walk is to lack a proper place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place. (de Certeau 1984:103)

Space suggests anonymity that is noticeable when watching people in a city. The individual's movement between one of their significant places to another is not through vacant space. The transition between two places creates potential new relevance in the creation of belonging to the process sense the location of geographical movement.

De Certeau makes an application of walking in the metaphoric sense by the following statement, "The act of walking is to the urban system what the act of speaking is to the "*speech act*" is to language or to the statements uttered" (de Certeau 1984:103). While the individual walking from place to place may only be aware of surroundings in terms of her own needs, the spaces she walks through are the places that hold meaning for other individuals. Those in 'space' or 'place' have different levels of power to choose points of engagement and the relevant aspects of their engagement. A statement is made through the very act of walking that determines the level of interaction.

In terms of ideological diaspora, the 'social experience of lacking a place' (de Certeau 1984) has a bearing on the 'tradition transition' (Rambo 1995) associated with conversion. A conscious choice of ideological movement occurs in conversion. It is applied as "Activity 'takes place' when speech and dialogue produce consciousness of relations that define social ecologies of space in a given milieu" (Conley 2000:55). One aspect of conversion as a tradition transition is the 'consciousness of relations' between what was 'place' before conversion becoming 'space' and what was 'space' becoming 'place'.

De Certeau theorises the power of place as a structural framework of authority held together by the power producers. He refers to the power structure as a strategy to maintain the framework. Individuals outside of the structure are consumers. The lack of power stimulates the need to use some creative technique or 'tactic' as an improvisation to gain access to the strategic framework of authority. Helga Wild argues that while the tactic is unsanctioned, it is necessary and tolerated (2012). In one respect, the tactic gives access to the subordinate but concurrently expands the structural framework incrementally and perhaps reinforces or reconfigures the power structure. The use of creative techniques and

tactical interactions between an agent and the dominant group are part of the transition of the Convert into the structure of the church. The agent using their physical and ideological movement with appropriate capital can create their sense of belonging in place.

2.7 Muted Group Theory

Edwin and Shirley Ardener devised muted group theory in the 1970s in their studies on feminism (Ardener 2008) and West and Turner developed the theory further. Groups may be muted as a result of ridicule, ritual, control, and harassment (West & Turner 2017:493). The foundation of muted group theory is based on three assumptions. Firstly, dominant and marginalised groups have different worldviews, hence separate and different roles. Secondly, the dominant group perpetuates their power to suppress the subordinate group; and thirdly, the subordinate group must modify their unique ideas and experiences to be understood (West & Turner 2017:488).

Stanback and Pearce, in their discussion on the communication of subordinate groups, argue that dominant group behaviours have higher agency than subordinate ones, thus creating different forms of communication (1981:21). Similarly, Edwin Ardener suggests within the concept of muted group theory, that collectives that function at the top of hierarchical structure may determine the communication of the entire society (Ardener 1978). Muted group theory can be thought of as, "Aware[ness] of the dynamics between the powerful and the marginalised" (Smith-Barkman 2018:3).

While muted group theory presents the concern of dominant and subordinate groups, Mark Orbe uses the theory to address the imbalance of the subordinate groups by using the term 'co-cultural groups' (1998:12). Orbe's development of co-cultural theory as a response to muted group theory applies what he refers to as standpoint theory. All perception is limited, but those positionally disadvantaged by the size of representation may have a fuller understanding of the hierarchical structure of the dominant group. Stuart Hall's ideas of position and representation connect with de Certeau's concept of tactics to access authoritative frameworks.

Muted Group Theory links to Stuart Hall's idea of the unresolved articulation of the diasporic identity due to the control of the dominant group. Mary Meares et al. break down the muted groups into three sub-groups:

1. 'Muted but engaged' while limited by the dominant group, can articulate.
2. The 'angrily disengaged' group is centred on their personal anger and deals with their separation by withdrawing.

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3. The 'resigned' group are disengaged but see no prospect of change

(Meares, Torres, Derkacs, Oetker, & Ginossar 2005:13).

Smith-Barkman acknowledges the 'subtle overlapping power issues' found in church and mission contexts. She offers three points of reference in assessing control:

1. Dominance - upholds and reinforces a viewpoint and is privileged to define terms.

2. Acceptance - where there is less acceptance, there is less respect.

3. Subordination - points of reference flow from dominant communication and resist change. (2018:3)

The application of muted group theory links to Bebbington's quadrilateral of the basics of Evangelical Christianity defined by the fundamental concepts of conversion, activism, Biblicism and crucicentrism. The core beliefs expressed in a particular language, with a specific terminology in a cultural location, inadvertently mute those without the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In terms of the Converts as a muted group with the British Evangelical social fields, this research centres on unmuting their voices and experiences.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have accessed literature on diaspora, conversion and social identity and presented them in the context of my research. The following provides a brief review of the main theories related to my research data analysis.

The chapter begins with traditional definitions of diaspora strongly connected to the land and geographical locations as the beginning point for Western academics. They adjust by broadening their definitions as they observe newer people movements. Stéphane Dufoix moves the diaspora discussion by focusing on 'modes of diaspora' rather than definitions.

The mode as a style is less connected to the binary of fixed location. The modes open up the broader idea of diaspora as a scattering of ideologies. The connection to and from various locations gives way to various ideologies. As the diaspora adapts to the host country, they can use their increased physical and social mobility to influence their current location and create ways to influence economics and politics in their country of origin.

From the subjective perspective, cultural theorist Stuart Hall, whose ancestors were deterritorialized by slavery to the Caribbean and then further fragmented as they migrated

to Britain as a labour force diaspora, offers different perspectives on diaspora debates. Paul Gilroy writes on examples of the merging of cultures. Beyond his ethnic mixed heritage, Gilroy sees far more benefit in the journey than the diaspora's destination. Once again, the idea of diaspora acknowledges James Clifford's view of diaspora as not necessarily land-based but also acknowledging ideological shifts.

Arjun Appadurai's articulation of the benefits of network relationships further removed from the land offers a connection to concepts of ideological shifts in managing authority structures. His concept of 'scapes' as layers of networks that bypass structural confinements might thus be perceived as the diaspora of ideas and ideologies.

For the Indian diaspora with a long history of migration, the diasporic nature of their religious ways meant that their sacred practices generated flexibility conducive to adaptable expressions of beliefs. The malleability of religious beliefs of the Indian diaspora in the twentieth century confronts religious conversion.

Diaspora as a geographical shift with an impact on cultural position and representation specifically beyond the first generation is introduced by Stephane Dufoix. Ideological shifts addressed by the Majority World theorists, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Brij Lal and Vijay Mishra, all with their personal experiences of migration and diaspora bring alternate perspectives on the diasporic experience. However, they fall short of deliberating the issues of religious conversion in diaspora and as an ideological diaspora.

The conversion of Gujarati in India is unusual. Hence the literature is scarce. However, the issues faced by Manilal Parekh and Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai Patel reveal the obstacle of religio-cultural representation of Christianity that lacks a distinct Gujarati application. The Converts who published narratives of their conversion experiences within the British Evangelical Christian milieu affirm their self-identity as Christians within the broader British multicultural society. However, their binary approach to religious self-identity overlooks the problems of their British Gujarati family members within the extended networks.

Social identity as identification is highly pertinent to individual Converts. Self-identities and identifications with the British Evangelical Christians and British Gujarati involve overlaps. Individual senses of identity and identification adjust continuously through degrees of belonging, reflecting the multiple processes and socialization practises experienced during their lives. The application of muted group theory could then reinterpret Bebbington's quadrilateral as axes rather than vertices. The rearrangement of

Bebbington's quadrilateral may then be applied in terms of a centred set rather than a bounded set.

The final three sections of this chapter gave a brief outline of the three theories applied to the analysis of British Gujarati Christian conversion as an ideological diaspora. The following chapter will address the methodological aspect of the research to address the Converts' concerns about choosing family roles, changing locational belonging and challenging practical authority.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the literature on the themes of diaspora, conversion and social identity. The Convert's experience is a result of many layered collections of ideologies, positionings and re-positionings that represent reflexivity in the process of scattering and gathering that has become part of many generations of geographical and ideological movement. This is reflected in the multi-layered approach to the methodology.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain how I accessed and gathered the data and how I chose to analyse the data. It begins with my epistemological assumptions as I began my research. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the selected research methods I used to collect the data and the two attempts at data collection. I then detail the research design which includes ethical considerations, my role as a researcher and the thematic analysis that arose from the data.

3.2 Epistemology and Positionality

An epistemology is "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know" (Crotty 1998:3). In looking at the theories of knowledge that explain how I understand what I know, I must articulate my own journey to understanding my epistemology. As a Convert, I began with an idea of an objective approach to my research. This is evident in my initial attempts to survey the British Evangelical Church about their relationships with Converts. I moved away from this pilot study early on in my research journey.

This shift towards a constructionist epistemological stance was due to my realisation that my knowledge is socially constructed based upon my context. Furthermore, as a Convert I have a subjectivist epistemological position as my personal experiences rely on semiotic and autoethnographic approaches to knowledge. My theoretical positioning is interpretivist based on symbolic interactionism and my methodology is ethnographic and heuristic which led to simultaneous analysis as I gathered data.

3.3 Positionality and Autoethnography

A theoretical position was a challenging aspect as a researcher. Perhaps the recognition of my experiences in the religious arenas made locating my own voice a key factor. The multiplicity of my experience is that as a British Gujarati, I function in the British Evangelical Church and academia. From these locations I must employ ethnography as an insider to the British Gujarati to extract data. The ethnographer must present something from a particular world that cannot be accessed by an outsider, analyse it, and present it in a form suitable for academia (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 1995:169).

As a researcher amongst the BGC, I came as a stranger but also an insider. My entry into the Convert's community was primarily to conduct research, but as an insider and as a Convert I had the benefit of multiple belonging. Herein is the challenge to pay proper attention to positionality, reflexivity and power relations in order to ensure that the research is trustworthy and handled in an ethical manner (Sultana 2007). The personal challenge of holding and analysing the intimate data in balance is difficult as so much of what has been shared by my research participants is deeply ingrained within a specific British Gujarati spiritual, linguistic and emotional space. The autoethnographic aspect of conducting this research also led to recognizing my own voice and holding and releasing my emotional response at appropriate times during the data collection, analysis and in how this thesis is presented.

There are advantages of multiple positions. Knowledge is, "always mediated by our perspectives and the interpretative framework through which we organize our perspectives" (Balarin 2009:295). There is a need to balance the paradoxical nature of my own journey. Applying Vertovec's term 'type of consciousness', the paradox is that my history includes being subject to some rejection and racist attitudes of some indigenous British people[1] at the same time having pride in my Gujarati heritage. Similarly, there have also been occasions of racist attitudes from Gujarati people that confronted my position within my British culture. Additionally, the British Gujarati community consider all British to be Christian by virtue of the fact they are white and British and yet I identify myself as a Christian (more recently, a Christ follower) in Britain.

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[1] Acts of racism toward the first, 1.5 and second generation South Asians including the BGC in my research continues to be a part of the BG and BGC background. and thus is relevant in their religious conversion, self-identity and subsequent development of transcultural practices. Kathryn Tyler 2015 'Attachments and connections: A 'white working-class' English family's relationships with their BrAsian 'Pakistani' neighbours.' Ethnic and Racial Studies, 38/7, 1169-1184.

As a reflexive practitioner, I am cognizant that my personal journey, cultural values and experiences impact my interaction with my primary sources. This will affect how participants share their narratives with me and how I select and use the information. My experiences will also influence the analysis of the data and the way that I choose to apply theory. Bourdieu refers to this as he explains 'participant objectivation' as the ability to recognize and admit one's own experiences being brought into the research journey (Bourdieu 2003:281).

This first realisation from my own experiences came early in my research journey as I recalled that I had spent much of life being informed about my identity through Oriental and self-Orientalized perspectives.[2] This was especially significant when I was confronted with a deeply Orientalised articulation of the 'sensual' nature of wearing a *sari* in church. On that occasion part of me felt chastised for wearing a sari in the majority white church yet I wanted to express my Gujaratiness in church even more.

On another occasion I found it easier to challenge Christian stereotypes amongst other South Asian Christians as I purposefully engaged in an act of obeisance by touching the feet of a British Gujarati elder at a church event at the London Church. While both of the above examples position me with an aspect of control, perhaps the deeper understanding of *Rakshabandan* I gained in my research surprised me. It gave me a profound understanding of the massive sense of loss of the depth of cultural relevance of family in conversion. I felt an acute sense of responsibility in my own role in the destruction of roles, relationships and belonging.

I contemplated how I managed my Convert's self-identity through de Certeau's statement, "we are foreigners on the inside *but there is no outside"* (Italics from the original) (1984:13). I noticed my own ability, like that of the British Gujarat Christian research participants, to manipulate my Christianness and my Britishness and downplay my own view of Gujaratiness in line with what I believe was expected of me.

My relationship with the Converts has changed over the course of my data collection. Initially I attempted to keep my own background private. I tried to enter the field as a researcher, using my position of privilege to access the required data (Finlay 2002). Efforts to disassociate my personal life were met with suspicion. In our casual gatherings people wanted to know about my own faith journey and other details of my

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[2] By using the terms 'Oriental' and 'Orientalism' I am referring to a stereotype of the South Asian that comes from a postcolonial perspective (Said:1975). In my research experience, this has been an important factor in the position and representation of South Asians in Britain and in their conversion experience.

personal life before they were prepared to divulge their own. As I sought access into their lives, they sought access into mine.

By a deeper involvement in the events at the London Church, the affiliated local charity shop, prayer meetings and social gatherings, my time with them became part of the natural rhythm of their lives and mine. It was at this point a second self-reflective realisation occurred while looking through the kitchen window onto the street below.[3] Raksha and I saw spectacular colourful scenes outside a Gujarati home one October morning. As we peered into the street below, we realised it was Diwali morning and as Converts to Christianity we were far removed from our connection to Gujarati roots.

It is the sense of being aware of my ability to function in the 'here and there' aspects of my research not in terms of locale but also in terms of my religious and cultural identities having multiple locations. Gilbert Oonk writing on the global Indian diaspora notes their "awareness of the double consciousness' and their ability to 'use it instrumentally" (Oonk 2007:18). With clarity on the implications of my stance, I give my research careful interpretation and reflection by the use of theory that might challenge personal multiple consciousnesses. The benefit of this approach is that I situated my research and analysis in my British Gujarati background and also my chosen faith identity as practised in the Western locale.

My initial bias in my research process into the Converts began at the British Evangelical Church (BEC) which revealed not only my own positionality but also the gap in research from the Convert's perspective. Perceptions, perspectives, and positions are flexible. In the latter stages of my research, I became aware of my position in both the worlds of the British Evangelical Church and academia. Firstly, through my involvement with mission prior to beginning my research I was completely committed to the British Evangelical Church as the source to gather data. Secondly, as a British Gujarati and a convert now reflecting back on my conversion journey after listening to and engaging with family members of Converts, I recognise how families are left to deal with the conversion of a family member. Pierre Bourdieu uses the term 'transfuge' (Robbins 1991:35), in reference to individuals who take advantage of the benefits of the education provided by the dominant culture, but push against its institutionalized structures. In the multiplicity of my belongings, at the one end my position is in the world of academia which appears clearly defined by standards of achievement. At the other end, my position is defined by constantly moving roles in what it is to be British and Gujarati.

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[3] See Chapter 1, page 1.

Another aspect of my position as a researcher is the concept of the insider/outsider in the study of religion as noted by Kim Knott (2010). While my study is on religio-cultural experiences, Knott's use of a linear illustration with a complete researcher outsider at one end and a complete participant inside at the other end is useful. The complete researcher outsider and the complete participant insider are polar opposites. Functioning exclusively either as an outsider researcher or participant would mean being confined to a binary and would provide an inadequate data set. Additionally, as researcher alone, ethnography at a distance would render a limited perspective of the fieldwork.

While ethnography recognises the tension but reconciles them in the role of the researcher, the polarity was created by me as I wrestled with my level of agency with Converts in the field. For the first time since my own conversion, I had access to acceptance and belonging that I had not previously experienced. This was juxtaposed with my acute feelings of the imposter syndrome among academia in Britain and perhaps in British Evangelical Christianity.

Given my positionalities, autoethnography is an essential aspect of my research. Autoethnography takes a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation about the self and social phenomena involving the self (Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang 2010:2). Drawing on autoethnography for my research allows me to move away from universal narratives of perceived homogenous cultural practices of both the Converts and the British Evangelical Christians in a shared geographical space.

Autoethnography as a more recent area of research seeks to "systematically analyse (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno)"* (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). Based on ethnography, autoethnography purposes to link the researcher self within the research field, the community, and within the research context (Wolcott 2004). While I admit my initial attempt as rather an amateur approach to observe the Converts, living amongst the community provided me with valuable lessons in collecting rich data. Additionally, the research of a small community within the British Gujarati meant that relational ties became and remain close. As a group representing the small number of Converts in Britain, the participants have expressed their trust in me as a researcher in how their conversion experiences are represented outside of their community.

According to Ellis, critics of autoethnography argue that there is a lack of hypothesizing, analysing and theorizing as well as a lack of fieldwork and a self-absorbed approach (2011). My extended periods of fieldwork amongst the Converts enabled me to

connect with at least two hundred of the three hundred BGC converts in England.[4] As a member of this group, a depth of fieldwork has been possible due to my foreknowledge of the culture. After my field visits, I took time to debrief and review the information I had gathered through journaling and organising my field notes. I then read and reviewed various theoretical approaches to contemplate how I would use the data.

Another criticism is that standards of autoethnography are not sufficiently artistic for autobiography, nor sufficiently scientific for ethnography (Denzin 2000; Maréchal 2010). This disruption of binaries does not preclude attention to rigour. However, it does challenge traditional approaches to ethnography that have an awareness of the impact of Western influences on research design. I would also argue that the disruption of binaries lends itself to the research of transcultural belonging that was to my advantage.

My use of ethnography employed a number of mixed methods, one of which was the quantitative method of a questionnaire. Creswell refers to this approach as "sequential mixed methods" (2014:16). Most of the data was gathered by qualitative means. Using a quantitative method closer toward the end of my data gathering enabled me to access information from a peripheral group in the ethnographic community that would otherwise have been invisible. I now detail the methods and how I employed them to gather the data.

3.4 Selection of Methods

Within the ethnographic research I employed a variety of methods. These included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, life histories, case studies, field notes and one quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire. This was in order to help triangulate my data and to access data from the local British Gujarati community and so that my ethnographic and autoethnographic involvement would not hinder my capacity to represent my research community. Now I describe each method in turn.

3.4.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation as a form of data collection allows close and intimate access to the community. One of the earliest anthropologists to apply fieldwork, Malinowski, sought methical and theorised approaches to give scientific credibility to ethnography

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[4] https://joshuaproject.net/countries/UK

(Tedlock 2005). The 'participation' aspect of this type of data gathering was limited. The 'observation' aspect was to record what was witnessed. In more recent years, the depth of participation by the observer has gone beyond Malinowski's use of the method.

According to Geertz, accessing 'thick descriptions' goes further than definition and description into context to provide a depth of understanding and explanation accessible to the outsider (Geertz 1973). This adds complexity to the context of the researcher's involvement. It is intensive participant observation that seeks a deeper engagement while simultaneously participating, watching and taking other factors of everyday life into consideration (Clifford 1992). Another way to look at participant observation is observant participation (Moeran 2009). This places the emphasis on the participating rather than simply observing. Observations are part of the experience of building a multi-angled view from the researcher's perspective.

My use of participant observation progressed through various stages as I became more familiar with the method and the field. In 2015, I sat at a distance and made notes on the auditory and visual aspects of the setting and recorded my observations. Even though I was a Convert, I was yet a stranger in the locale. As time progressed, my participation increased as I was welcomed as an insider. I was also a researcher and, therefore, my commitment level as an academic appeared more salient than my belonging through my religious self-identity as a fellow Convert.

In time, my relationship with Raksha encouraged personal interactions amongst individuals while we jointly participated in church services and social events. The later stages of my participation included taking part in a memorial service alongside others who were recently bereaved. On this particular occasion, I was asked to take a key role. My involvement switched between participant observer and observant participator. By exploring the area between the two poles, it is possible to fluctuate between the two.

The most intense time of participant observation was challenged by participant objectivation. According to Bourdieu, this is to go beyond ownership of personal experiences to what he refers to as the 'social conditions of possibility' (2002:1). The idea is that personal habitus create resources for analysis. While seeking evidence and analysing the habitus of others, it is easy to slip into the role of the observer and not recognize my own habitus as invisible to me.

A moment of glimpsing my habitus occurred as a result of being included in a trip to India to be a part of a mission team with other members from the London Church, American missionary interns as well as a British Gujarati mother of a Convert. Through

two weeks of immersion twenty-four hours a day, amongst and as one of the Converts in Gujarat, I recognised my personal ability to understand and analyse the data was indelibly connected to my habitus. I became aware that even in Gujarat, as Converts we were trapped in the paradigm of the 'other' in ways we could not recognise until we were separated from our own created otherness. The categorisation by the Christians in Gujarat of us as a group of Converts returning to their ancestral home was not what we had expected. We were referred to simultaneously as, '*apra vara*' literally meaning from our backyard, but also '*barehna lok*' meaning outside people.

Having spent the majority of my life as a Convert and part of the British Evangelical Church, I found myself critiquing not only my own conversion but also my role in upholding a framework of conversion life that rejected the validity of pre-conversion culture. I recognised the pressure of my perception of the academic structure that could confine the richness of my research and thus reduce it to fit in. Through the intensity of repeated reflectivity and reflexivity, I had to acknowledge my own rigid definitions, in order to appreciate the uniqueness of the layers not only of the Converts, but also the same Converts within the British Evangelical Church context.

Participant objectivation seeks to re-assess the balance of emic and etic aspects of academic research continually to hold my fields of academia and conversion in creative tension. Each level of participation not only afforded a variety of ways to gather data, but also personalised the analysis of the data. The degrees of engagement in my participant observations influenced the variety of interviews, methods and the depth of details shared. I believe my thick descriptions were a result of the combination of gradually allowing autoethnography to become part of ethnography.

Ellis argues that the use of autoethnography allows thick descriptions to create a place for narrative to begin to address intense situations (Holman-Jones, Adams & Ellis 2013). As some of the difficult experiences with British Gujarati family transpired while I was living in the research community, I recognised that many more had occurred amongst most Converts including myself, but we could not speak about them freely.

Due to the depth of the relationships with the Converts, I was introduced to their family who had been significantly impacted by the Christian conversion. I believe it was in those instances that the thick descriptions of ethnography took on an added dimension of complexity, perhaps even intimacy, that could only be achieved by autoethnography. Including the British Gujarati in my research added a background to the different aspects

of the impact of conversion. Autoethnography is thus more than a method but allows for participant objectivation to inform and connect and validate my analysis of the data.

3.4.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews offer a flexible approach to data collection. They rely upon less structured methods rather than using set questions. Semi-structured interviews allow for an awareness and a sensitivity of situations as they occur in the participants' process of recollection. This approach was specifically employed to allow participants the freedom in the details and depth of information they chose to share (Roof 2014). A basic set of questions regarding memories of childhood and the journey to conversion enabled the themes to emerge (Gray 2004). Open-ended questions allowed spontaneous issues to surface, especially when asking about the roles of family members in the practices at home. Wording questions in an intentional manner, such as asking about memories of experiences shared with other family members and the broader community helped to gain access to the particulars (Patton 2002). The knowledge of the demographic background details, alongside an understanding of behaviours, opinions, and values, help the researcher glean the information as the participant shares the story in their own words.

While the researcher is the authoritative figure in the interview setting, the initial relationship began in a more neutral location. This allowed for introductions and a time of becoming acquainted and some friendly conversational interviews. Gathering data through narrative inquiry, "is marked by its emphasis on relational engagement between researcher and research participant" (Clandinin & Caine 2008:542). This allows the researcher and the participant to connect within the larger cultural, social and institutional spaces (Clandinin & Caine 2008). Part of the semi-structured interview process within narrative inquiry combines the written, oral and observed information that allows for more detailed data.

Through the interview process, I was able to gauge the participant's willingness to share their narratives with me in depth. Semi-structured interviews were with twenty participants. The majority were conducted in English, however I noticed that for the 1st generation migrants there was more use of code mixing.[5] This allowed for an extra layer of connection as some familiar Gujarati words were used in place of English words. At times, Gujarati terms were used to provide more details especially where the English

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[5] Code mixing refers to mixing of more than one language in a conversation.

equivalent seemed insufficient. For example, in English the titles by which various family members are known do not reveal the intricacy of the familial role. The siblings of parents are either uncles or aunts with little difference in their roles apart from those individually chosen due to the extent of relationship. For South Asians, the relevance of a mother's sisters is very different to a father's sisters. The husbands or wives of both parent's siblings are not as basic as the roles of uncles and aunts by marriage.

In addition, when speaking about various events that were located within the Hindu culture, there was less requirement to explain the relevance of the term. For example, there was a certain familiarity in not having to explain in English the understanding of the celebration of Diwali or the roles of different family members as naming ceremonies. I already possessed the foreknowledge of what British Gujarati occasions entailed. One of the most relevant terms that came with a shared British Gujarati cultural pre-understanding in English and Gujarati was 'caste'.[6] On several occasions when the term was used, there was a pause and a need to justify the participant's use of the term. The participants found it necessary to remind me that while other Gujarati may use caste to differentiate between people that shared the same ethnicity, they personally would never treat anyone differently (Rani/inv/3; Vina/inv/1). On the other hand, when the interviews were conducted in Gujarati, the term *jaat* was used. *Jaat* is used as variety, type, kind, race or self. The word caste has a negative connotation in English which appeared to be removed by using the term '*jaat*'.

The combined use of the English and Gujarati languages was useful, but in addition, the British Gujarati community is closely connected to the historical events of the Independence of India from the British Empire. The researcher's autoethnographic foreknowledge was able to connect with the shared epistemological aspects of the participants. Their identifications of what it means to be Indian from their own perspective and what they perceive to be Indian from the historical English perspective is based upon their personal experience. This had to be unpacked as an ongoing analysis of our use of English and Gujarati terminology during the interviews and subsequent interactions over the course of the research. The use of other terms such as icon instead of idol, *mandir* instead of temple and in some instances, festival or celebration instead of religious ritual gave rise to amenable cultural crossovers that afforded acceptable terminology for the cultural insider and foreign outsider.

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[6] Even though early documentation by anthropologists translated it as such (Risley 1908:68), the British use of the term is as 'A system of dividing societies' (Oxford English Dictionary 1989).

The importance of code mixing language was further apparent in the uses of terms that are acceptable in the British Evangelical context and the British Gujarati context. This was especially salient during the life histories as the use of familiar words contributed to the flow of conversation. Owning my prejudices as the foregrounding of my research project, I believe is an asset rather than an obstacle to gathering and analysing the data, hence the level of my transparency toward those who participated in this research.

The interviews were recorded over several visits to the field. The transcripts and original recordings have been archived along with my field notebooks. I was the sole interviewer. Recognising the value of my pre-understanding and foreknowledge of this rare group meant that including research assistants would have made a difference in the selection of information that participants might be willing to share. A person (in U.S.A. with no access to the identities of the participants) and I have undertaken the transcription of some of the interviews. The remainder of interviews were transcribed through a confidential translation service on the Internet.

3.4.3 Life History

A life history or life stories are how, "Individuals organize culture through 'the stories of the self' that they express or enact in joining new social settings" (Eisenhart 1995:5-6). As a researcher, my use of ethnography was to provide a representation of a group of Converts during a particular time and place. By gathering data through a life history, there were unexpected details that allowed the participants the opportunity to empower how they were represented.

"In expressing their interpretations, individuals contribute to the material conditions of their ongoing participation and to the cultural models available" (Eisenhart 1995:21). For the majority of the Converts, sharing their conversion experience was the first time they had been able to verbalise their personal narrative. In order to access and present insider views of daily life and practices, stories needed to be in the participant's own voice. From telling their stories they were articulating the cultural changes that had occurred from the influence of other cultures (Langness & Frank 1981).

During my research, the access to participants deepened at various stages as intimate stories of life changing events were shared. Life histories were recorded sometimes over more than one session and in different locations. This was significant as

some of the Converts minimise or ignore much of their pre-conversion life unless it relates directly to the change in their religious self-identity as Christians.

My initial concern was that the type of data participants chose to share related to my identity as a Convert, someone they considered to be a leader due to my career in international Christian mission and because I was a researcher. The trip to India resulted in a closer association with a few women from the London Church. This was one of the ways I was able to connect more deeply and gather rich thick detailed narratives that further contributed to the choice of participants to share detailed life histories. Remembering details of their past and sharing strangely familiar experiences as insiders/outsiders to the local Gujarati community in India gave us a sense of closeness and comradeship.

My time in India also acted as a source of supplemental data to the life history interviews. The participants selected how and what they shared in the interviews. However, spending two very intense weeks, sharing rooms, meals and all activities gave a greater understanding of how conversion played into relationships with their family members. Consequently, upon returning to Britain, I was invited to meet British Gujarati friends and relatives during subsequent field visits to North London.

In two instances, our shared experiences in India led to the opportunity to engage more closely with British Gujarati family members. I also had the chance to gather field notes from interactions with other relatives and learned how they manage their transcultural lives amongst themselves and British Gujarati community, and the broader British community and the British Evangelical Christians. The contributions by one British Gujarati family were especially significant with Raksha's mother. She was able to use Gujarati to articulate her concerns about the conversion of her daughter to us as Converts.

While the life history was the choice made by the participant to go into greater depth in narrating their experiences, apart from the large quantity of data, a depth of relationship between the researcher and two of the participants became apparent. This led to the opportunity to utilise case studies. These are the focus of the next section.

3.4.4 Case Studies

The case study is a detailed and intensive focus on one single area of data selection with a view to comprehend its particularity and complexity by understanding the activities

within a certain set of circumstances (Stake 1995:xi). The ethnographic case study is located within the specific selected research community. The case study has been referred to as a bounded system in that it is contained within specific parameters (Merriam 1988; Stake 1995). It has also been described as, "a unit of human activity embedded in the real world which can only be understood in context" (Gillman 2000:1).

Mike Burawoy (1991) argues that theoretical gaps and silences can be better explored through case studies. In this sense, the case study is interpretative as it uses theory to explain the detail within a certain group. The ethnographic research provided the broader parameters, however through interviews and continued interaction, ideas and themes became more specific. I designed the case studies to provide real time connections to incidents in which decisions were made about family roles, location, and decision-making (Yin 2014).

While the use of ethnography brings the less visible BGC community to light and revealed surfacing themes, the use of case studies proved a useful technique to focus on specific themes. Each case study is situated within the ethnographic setting. As the community became familiar with my presence, I became involved in their behavioural patterns, rituals and custom practices. In a sense I became invisible to them and I believe there was a danger that the information I had entered the field to research, would become invisible to me. As themes of family roles, locational belonging and the challenge of practices became prevalent through the other research methods, I noticed that the three cases captured and highlighted various aspects of how the conversion process modifies the lives of the Converts. Following are the details of each case study and their connection to the three different themes in the three data chapters.

3.4.4.1 Rani Darshan Extended Family

The Rani Darshan case study in Chapter 4 provides a more detailed example of the structural roles within the British Gujarati family. Rani was the first person in her multigenerational family to convert. As an incoming bride joining her patrilocal family, her roles within it impacted relationships between immediate members, the extended family and the broader BG community. This case study details the repercussions of conversion upon the social, economic and institutional capitals such as birth order, gender, education, and occupation. While variations and adaptations occur, the cultural

understanding of the family's frameworks provide descriptive data through this British Gujarati and Convert's extended families.

Rani and Mohan have adult daughters, Kanta and Bhanu, and an adult son, Anand. At the time of this research Rani worked as a teacher's assistant and Mohan as a professor of medicine. They are forward caste[7] Hindu of Brahmin background. While caste is not really an important aspect of British Gujarati life, the conversion of people of forward caste is very rare and the ramifications upon the family are greater due to their roles in society and connections in networks. Typically, religious conversion amongst the poor in India is understood as a form of social mobility.

3.4.4.2 British Gujarati London Church 1 (London Church)

The London Church[8] case study in Chapter 5 demonstrates some of the challenges of Converts as they shift the location of their religious practices to the church. This case study explores the visible shift of worship locations and how the dislocating and relocating from one physical place of worship to another is confronted and adjusted through events that occur at the London Church. Their weekly gatherings are in an old (Christian) Brethren Hall located in Jimvum[9] in North West London. Sixteen percent of the population are Gujarati speakers. The population of the area is thirty-six percent Hindu.[10] The congregation of the London Church is a small group of mostly Converts from Hindu and Jain backgrounds. There is also an American missionary family who live locally and a few American mission interns that serve for two to four years. The Converts are mostly first generation converts to Christianity and first or second-generation migrants to Britain. Some of them have come directly from India. Others came from East Africa during Africanisation in the 1960s and are considered 'twice migrants' (Bhachu 1985).

The leadership of the church is by a group of elders. Apart from one American man, the team consists of British Gujarati who are all twice migrants. There is a married couple, an elderly single woman serving as treasurer and a married man. The American is a missionary who has lived in the community for over twenty-five years and is also a

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[7] Forward caste refers to the four main categories of caste: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras.

[8] BGLC1 is the abbreviation for British Gujarati London Church 1/London Church.

[9] Pseudonym for a North London suburb.

[10] This information is from local statistics. The accessed website information is protected.
http://jimvum.localstats.co.uk/census-demographics/england/ (de-identified) [accessed 20/10/2017]

member of the team. A number of the British Gujarati Christian elders were already meeting regularly in a home and attending a local British Evangelical Church prior to the start of the London Church in 2001.

Their weekly gatherings, celebrations of birth, baptisms and memorials have a strong British Gujarati influence and thus offered many unanticipated opportunities for data collection. The London Church provides a location for the BGC as they made the shift from one place of worship to another.

3.4.4.3 The Bhakt Family

The Bhakt Family case study in Chapter 6 focuses on identities and their management of their multi-layered identification amongst British Evangelical Christians, Converts and British Gujarati social fields. This case study is based on the event of the baptism of their daughters. It has specific interest in that the choices of family roles, locational belonging and lived authority were all in the process of being established during this research project. The uniqueness of this case is that it began in the Convert's setting, hence the divergence of British Evangelical Christian and British Gujarati traditions were observed in real time.

The Bhakt family's issues of cultural identifications differ from the experiences of those who converted decades ago. The immediate Bhakt Convert's family consists of Prakash and Priti Bhakt and their two daughters, Lina (born 2010) and Amina (born 2018). Priti and Prakash are both professionals working in London. They have a large extended family many of whom continue practices of traditional British Gujarati rituals. The extended family is very close and maintain frequent gatherings. The challenges of family roles and locational belonging are exemplified through this case study as it captures the changes transpiring in the practical lived experiences of authority.

While most of the Converts had converted some years ago, it was evident in all the interviews that at some point, their conversion had influenced changes in their decision-making processes. The Bhakt family were still in the process of establishing the parameters of religious identity within their immediate nuclear family and amongst their extended family network.

3.4.5 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research method that may be used as a way to measure views and ideas on a specific subject area. In terms of studying religious behaviour, the purpose of the questionnaire is especially valuable in the "focus on aspects like belonging, belief and behaviour" (Navarro-Rivera & Kosmin 2014:397). Furthermore, the questionnaire became a way to access new participants within my research community that while in the vicinity of the ethnographic field were not necessarily directly connected to any specific Converts. The questionnaire is a closed end research method that confines the data collection within certain areas of a relevant specific data set (Creswell 2014).

My interest was to assess the ability of the British Gujarati to adjust their observance and celebrations of festivals based upon their movement from Gujarat to Britain. Firstly, this included questions on the adaptation of *Rakshabandan* as a festival from the country of origin to their lifestyle in Britain. Secondly, there were questions on British Gujarati celebration of Christmas as a festival celebrated in the host country. Both *Rakshabandan* and Christmas contain historical ritual elements of sacred symbolic ceremonies that have been adjusted as practices to bring individuals into a community.

By adding the questionnaire in mixed research methods, there is something of what is termed in autoethnography as "staging impossible encounters" (Jones 2005:784). This refers to the ability of the autoethnographer to bring together two ideas that appear completely different in order to negotiate issues of importance. For this reason, the questionnaire was administered to a combination of British Gujarati and Converts including those whom I met purely during administration of the questionnaire, those I met in Leicester during Gujarati Camp, and those I met during my field visits. The questionnaire reveals the British Gujarati adaptation of *Rakshabandan* in diaspora that may be invisible when approaching this research from the British Evangelical or Convert's practices.

3.4.5.1 *Rakshabandan* Questionnaire Details[11]

The questionnaire consisted of inquiries that concerned the observances of *Rakshabandan* and Christmas. The comparison between the two is based upon the absence of a sacred text that requires the celebration or observation of either Christmas for British Evangelical

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[11] A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix D.

Christians or *Rakshabandan* for British Gujarati. Additionally, there is the idea that individuals, families and communities create different ways of celebrating that change over the years. Local adaptations of Christmas are celebrated as part of the local Christian, secular and other religious socio-cultural practices.

Sixty participants were involved in the *Rakshabandan* questionnaire. Thirty participants were of British Gujarati background and thirty were Converts. There were an equal number of male and females. A copy of the questionnaire document has been included in the Appendices. The first set of questions are about the religio-cultural celebration of *Rakshabandan*. The second set of questions are about the religio-cultural celebration of Christmas. The inclusion of Christmas was to demonstrate the way British Gujarati adapt their cultural practices in the diaspora.

The questionnaire was conducted amongst the British Gujarati in the Ealing Road area and in the Shree Sanatan *mandir* with permission from the *maraj* and in Leicester at the British Gujarati Christian Camp which included one day for Converts and British Gujarati day-visitors to join in the day's activities.

3.4.6 Field Notes

Field notes as a research method "create characters and scenes on a page" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1995:212). Over time, the ethnographer's presence becomes familiar to herself. Field notes add another dimension of observations during the research. My initial moment of awareness of the value of my observation in relation to my personal experiences occurred during a field visit in 2018. I recall the grasp of witnessing a scene through the window and simultaneously scrutinizing myself and included it to the beginning of Chapter 1. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw refer to such a moment when: "The writer becomes explicitly attuned to responding to both the voices from the field and to the voices of the envisioned scholarly readers" (1995:213).

The beginning of the ethnographic data collection was through participant observation at the British Evangelical Churches and the London Church. The early field notes reveal my movement from an outsider to insider stranger and then to an insider in the Convert's communities. Furthermore, the field notes also revealed the autoethnographic aspect of the research and prompted the inclusion of additional methods of data collection.

I used field notes to draw data from British Gujarati spiritual, linguistic and emotional space. This was beneficial during the life history interviews as it became apparent the participants had never narrated their own lives in such depth. Not having to ask for explanations due to the inclusion of Gujarati words was an immense benefit to the flow of memories. Similarly, shared awareness of the comparable experiences regarding home life and religio-cultural practices gave rise to cathartic moments for the participants. Specifically witnessing Raksha's mother's weeping as she recollected her daughter's conversion. Rani Darshan's presence during this moment triggered her own moment of remembering a letter arriving from her natal family stating how her father was devastated by the news of Rani's conversion and was unable to eat or leave his room for many days.

The field notes from two particular life histories revealed the ongoing effects of individual conversion upon extended families. The conversion of the Converts, especially the multigenerational Darshan family and the ongoing impact on their broader family and community, required that the collection of data reach beyond the life history interviews. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the practices at the London Church meant that interviews and participant observation was a portion of the rich data available. The field notes signified the necessity to include these case studies.

During my extended visits to the field, my notes tracked my manner of interactions with the British Gujarati community through shopping, my daily jogging routine or standing at the bus stop. The British Gujarati I encountered were not connected to Converts or the British Evangelical church, yet it was apparent that they had adapted their religio-cultural practices to fit into life in Britain. This prompted me to note some of their religio-cultural practices and to attempt some level of triangulation of data, thus a questionnaire was added to my research methods.

3.5 Data Collection

As a rare group amongst the British Gujarati and the British Evangelical churches, the Convert's presence often goes unnoticed. There are approximately three hundred (unconfirmed) Converts in England.[12] The difficulty in confirming exact numbers is also a concern. Amongst the Converts, there is a belief that public knowledge of their conversion would have negative repercussions on personal and familial networks. Data

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[12] https://joshuaproject.net/countries/UK [accessed 10-03-2022]

collection was conducted through two different stages where the first was less successful leading to a re-evaluation of research methods.

3.5.1 Initial Attempts at Data Collection

My initial inquiries into the Converts were through indigenous British church leaders. Converts (and other converts from various Asian religious backgrounds) are generally spread throughout indigenous (white) British churches or multi-ethnic churches. In most cases, the church leadership could generally identify South Asians in the congregation or could be aware of previous religious identity but could rarely name a specific ethno-linguistic background.

My earliest field notes from January 2015 noted responses to my questions to indigenous (white British) church leaders about their South Asian congregants. Most of the time I was told they were aware of South Asians being present in the church service but had little other information. On four different occasions I noted that I received essentially the same response. "They seem very British and speak English well. No one knows much about family or language background" (Field Notes 2015). At times I asked the last name to see if I could work out the origin.

I began to seek connections with the Converts through a search online while I was resident in the U.S.A. and became aware of a group meeting in Hounslow. The Gujarati Christian Fellowship (GCF) UK website offers international Skype prayer meetings that take place bi-monthly. I registered my interest to join the group via the website. Despite several attempts to contact them, I received no response.

The Gujarati Christian Fellowship UK started in 2007. The website states their aim, "as a forum where Christians of Gujarati origin can get a platform to worship Jesus in their mother tongue & address each other's social needs".[13] The trustees came to Britain from India between the years of 2003-2008. Through a South Asian church leaders' gathering in London in 2017, I met with one of the leaders of the group. I found that they had been Christians in Gujarat for several generations. The aim of the church seems similar to that of the early Chinese diaspora churches in Britain, that their primary purpose is to cater to their own people group from India, rather than the Converts.[14]

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[13] https://www.gcfuk.org [accessed 23/09/15]

[14] https://www.cocm.org.uk/link-70thanniversaryissue [accessed 18-06-2021]

GCF church services are held in the afternoon when the local white British congregation is not using the thirteenth century church building. GCF set up in a parish room in the church for the early evening service. Their website contains information about the Hindi service, stating that 'All are welcome' and included instructions to enter by the back car park door. On my visit to the location, I had much difficulty locating the back door and eventually had to telephone the number on the sign outside the church to alert someone that I could not get into the building. This confirmed some of the obstacles of being able to locate Converts' gatherings.

3.5.2 Second Attempts at Data Collection

My continued online search led me to a website for South Asian Concern (SAC) based in London.[15] One of their stated objectives is, "to help people respect their family's heritage and culture in the way they follow Jesus." My name was added to their contact list and shortly after relocating to Britain from U.S.A. I was invited to attend a social event for those interested in the work of SAC. Mostly indigenous white British were in attendance although some had been or were currently involved in missionary work in India. Others present were living in areas of Britain with higher populations of South Asians. Of the South Asians present, most were from a Christian background along with some 1st generation British Gujarati Converts to Christianity. This was the beginning of my contact with a small Converts' gathering at the London Church.[16] The website describes the London Church as a "multicultural group who follow Prabhu Isu (Jesus) while embracing British Asian culture".

From my initial contact with Philip Night,[17] at the SAC event in 2014, I was gradually afforded the benefit of his network of Converts. Most of the data gathered came from the networks that I became a part of through my connections with the London Church. This approach known as snowball sampling helps to increase the number of participants (Morgan 2008). The advantages of this approach allowed access to hidden populations and the use of social networks (Biernacki & Waldorf 1981). The snowballing

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[15] http://southasianconcern.org/about-us/ [accessed 20/10/2015]

[16] London Church is the abbreviated form of British Gujarati London Church 1. This pseudonym complies with the wishes of the church leadership.

[17] Pseudonym.

approach also led me to increase the research methods which further added to the spectrum of the research design.

In my effort to see if Converts had any cultural connection to their pre-conversion traditions, I sought information from South Asian Concern who informed me of small group gatherings. In places where there is a higher population of Gujarati and other South Asian Christian Converts, there are some regular gatherings meeting in homes or churches. South Asians are usually invited to attend by word of mouth. Other British Evangelical Church leaders, congregants and missionaries may attend, mostly to observe or lead discussions on Christianity and the Bible. This confirmed the necessity of ethnography as a research method.

Upon making connection with the London Church different challenges were presented. Firstly, beyond the leadership and lay workers, attendance at the scheduled Sunday service was mostly sporadic. Secondly, despite the common factors I shared with the group there was a certain sense of privacy and cultural sensitivity. This was a restraint to accessing the group, as a member of the same people group speaking the same language. The initial underlying caution is that I may be connected to their South Asian social networks locally, nationally and overseas[18] (Field Notes 2014; 2018). There exists a sense of privacy in how information about conversion is made public and how that could affect the family and community. The leadership at the London Church introduced me to the Converts and informed them of my research into their conversion experiences.

3.5.3 Selection of Participants

I began to attend the London Church and engage with some of the members. One of the elders introduced me to Raksha Gupta. She offered me a place to stay and helped to make connections in the community through the local charity shop that was affiliated to the Church. This helped to build different degrees of relationships that allowed each participant to determine their level of involvement in the research project. All of the participants had immediate or network connections with the London Church. Details of each participant can be found in Appendix A 5.1.1

Apart from my field visits in North London, I also became aware of a group of Converts in Leicester. I had the opportunity to attend the Gujarati Camp along with some

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[18] This was noted by own experience as a BGC in 2014 as I began my research. In 2018 I noted similar problems as American missionaries were attempting to connect the BG trained counsellors to other BG hoping to provide mental and emotional healthcare.

members of the London Church hosted by the Converts in Leicester. I gathered ten semi-structured interviews from Leicester to check if I had reached a saturation point of information from my fieldwork in North London. The details of the Leicester participants are located in Appendix B. These interviews provided very similar details. Due to the lack of ongoing relationships, and the limitations of time, the responses to the *Rakshabandan* questionnaire in Leicester provided more applicable data than the interviews.

3.6 Research Design

The research is designed to uncover the aspects of a Convert's life by providing a cross-section of data that highlights the recurring ideas and brings themes to the surface. I discovered a significant richness and depth in the data by using a range of qualitative methods. Morgan (2014) states that this type of research design is inductive and places the emphasis on meanings and interpretation. It offers depth and details based upon relationships (2014:48). The qualitative data collection has been through the gradual but thorough immersion of the researcher within the community.

3.6.1 Ethics

The ethnographic research of the Converts was approached with sensitivity. I accessed the Research Ethics Framework, Economic and Social Research Council website and referred to the six core principles for the duration of my research.[19] All interviewed participants completed a consent form. They also have the opportunity to review their transcripts. Clifford Geertz notes, "the ethnographer does not and in my opinion, cannot perceive what his informants perceive" (1983:58). The participants have been given the opportunity to see how their interviews are analysed alongside the theory to avoid misinterpretation. As many participants had strong ties to the London Church, the leaders announced my presence and my intention to conduct research at the weekly gatherings on several occasions.

All names and locations for the qualitative methods have been changed. The questionnaire was anonymous. Personal details such as gender, age, origin, and religious identity were noted with permission. Field notes made from home visits to British

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[19] https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/our-core-principles/ [accessed 22-06-2021]

Gujarati and the Convert's family members have excluded identifiable details. Each contact introduced me as their friend and as a researcher. Key participants and some of their family members have continued to maintain varying levels of relationship. These range between a close friend and confidant to occasional invitations to social events and social media interactions. As a Convert and a researcher, I consider some degree of continuity of field work relationships as an ethical responsibility beyond the boundaries of my research project.

3.6.2 Role of the Researcher

Bird and Lamourex Scholes state the need for "Awareness of cultural and religious norms [that] allows us to respect various etiquette[s] and reciprocity" (2014:85). As my relationships in the community strengthened there was a cultural expectation of reciprocal relational exchange. Over the course of my research as I became part of the community I was involved in the daily lives of the participants. Consequently, a few participants visited me in Oxford and brought Gujarati food items and prepared meals for me for special occasions or when I had been unwell.

Their acts were key to respecting collective dignity as people and not resources for the purpose of my research. Their homes and lives were not identified by them as the field or the data, no more than I was 'a researcher'. I became Usha*ben* or on occasion Usha*ji*, signalling an extension of the relationship to an extended family/community and a respect for my age and position in their community. The suffix *ben* means sister, signifying my place as a member of the family. The suffix *ji* indicates an honorific title of respect. This led to my recognition of the semiotic interpretation of family roles, locational belonging and practical authority within the Convert community and contributed to the themes surfacing from the data.

3.6.3 Thematic Analysis

I chose to engage with the data by using thematic analysis. This is defined as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns of themes within the data" (Braun & Clarke 2006:79). Braun and Clarke further claim that rather than searching for themes and expecting ideas to arise, generating themes is far more accurate. Based on the combination of methods used to gather the data and through my own history and connection with my research group, I would be claiming something of an objective gaze

by 'searching' for themes. The themes were generated through my engagement with the participants and the data.

The use of ethnography is openended, hence the themes were generated throughout the periods of data collection. As the research instrument with the foreknowledge of the British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian conversion, I was able to identify words, phrases and ideas that would be difficult to emphasise and interpret to those who did not share the similar experiences. Therefore, as the themes are generated, I must not only ask myself what theoretical assumptions informed my work but also look at my data and ask what theoretical assumptions are evident in the words used and the way the stories are articulated.

To give voice to the research community through this thesis became a more prevalent theme as the data collection and analysis progressed. Muted group theory originating from the studies of feminism by Edwin and Shirley Ardener advance the potential of the study of ideological diaspora of the British Gujarati Christian conversion from within. The flexibility of thematic analysis releases the data from what may have been the researcher's predetermined boundaries, and allows the data to draw from the margins and explore the liminal themes that arise in the British Gujarati Christian conversion experience.

With this in mind, I now present the research question:

By what means and to what extent do the British Gujarati become transcultural through Christian conversion?

The question is supported by a series of sub-questions:

a. *How have the structural family relationships within the British Gujarati family been altered through instances of conversion?*

b. *How is the sense of belonging of the British Gujarati Christian Convert formed?*

c. *What elements influence, inform and shape the exercise of authority in the life of the British Gujarati Christian Convert?*

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have clarified my epistemology and position as a researcher and a Convert. I have provided a detailed account of the various research methods and the background information on the three case studies, each of which is drawn upon in the three data chapters. Following this, I have explained my initial attempts to gather data and the difficulties of researching the British Gujarati Christian conversions. After

detailing the selection of participants, I have offered my research design which includes ethical considerations, my role as the researcher and the use of thematic analysis that resulted from information as it was conveyed by the participants. Finally, I offer the research question and three sub-questions. Each of the sub-questions deals with one of the three key themes of choices of family roles, the changes in locational belonging and the challenges of practised authority. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 each address one of the themes.

The following chapter focuses on family roles as the first theme that emerged from the data. In each instance of a British Gujarati Christian conversion, family members' responses to the change in religious identity and the impact on family roles and relationships were the most conflicting, meaningful and memorable aspects of their conversion to a new religious self-identity.

Chapter 4: Choosing Family Roles

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the consequences of British Gujarati Christian (BGC) conversion on British Gujarati family relationships, roles, practices, and expectations. It focuses on factors such as gender, birth position, education, income and disabilities. British Gujarati conversion to Christianity can be seen as a 'tradition transition' (Rambo 1995). In this type of conversion individuals or groups choose to exchange one set of religious beliefs for another rather than move across from one subset within a religion to another, or from lapsed to active belief (Rambo 1995:14). As such there is a completely different set of relationships, rituals, rhetoric, and roles (Rambo 1995:103). These influence behaviour that creates, and reinforces self-identity and identification with others through interactions (Jenkins 2004).

In all the conversion stories gathered, the initial response from family members is to question the individual choice to change personal religious identity from Hindu to Christian. Referring to a quote from the National Christian Council (of India),[1] Sharma (2014) draws attention to the distinction between conversion as inner spiritual change and proselytization as a change in religious identity for personal gain (Sharma 2014:430). Personal gain refers to many Indians as the perception of Christian mission as manipulating poor, deprived Indians by providing them means for social mobility. The idea of conversion for 'personal gain' was not considered as a motive for conversion by any for the Converts I encountered. A personal choice of religious self-identity at the expense of family and community cohesion was difficult for families to understand. Some aspect of selfish or personal gain overwhelmed any idea of personal spiritual choice.

As explained in the previous methodology chapter, the mixed research methods approach encourages a less linear style to mirror the reflexive multi-layered nature of the British Gujarati Christian conversion experiences within the family and the British Evangelical Church (BEC). The thick descriptions relying on the ethnographic and autoethnographic processes will begin to lay a foundation of the core aspects of choosing family roles post-conversion.

By drawing from the mixed research methods of data collection, each section in the chapter discusses various aspects and perspectives of choices, challenges and

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[1] Sharma quotes Donald Eugene Smith 1963 in *India as a Secular State.* Princeton:Princeton University Press.

compromises made by the Convert and British Gujarati families. Focusing on the issue of the importance of "For what counts is conduct not belief" in family contexts (Sharma 2014:431), the long-term impact of conversion is apparent from the varying degrees of extraction and involvement with family practices, roles and relationships.

The nuclear family of Raksha Gupta and the extended family of Rani Darshan are discussed in the first of the data sections. The following section will delve into the binary of family roles, religio-cultural roles, and how British Gujarati Christian converts interpret the expression of the family. Section 4.4 focuses on the broader collective family religio-cultural identity and looks at the connections between an individual choice of religion and the expectations of British Gujarati in terms of a collective religious group. The section following details how one conversion in a family changes the *dharmic* path of multiple generations revealing the depth of collective family and community *dharma*.

In section 4.6, marriage after British Gujarati Christian conversion brings challenges of personal choice and the conflict of family involvement. Marital status with a disability is an area where British Evangelical Christians and British Gujarati work through the blurry sense of combined issues of familial compassion and responsibilities. Next, the section on *Rakshabandan* shows how the adaptation of a British Gujarati event reveals the flexible nature of diasporic cultural practices. It demonstrates how religio-cultural events are observed and flexible enough in diaspora to recover the sense of family through alternate ways of choosing family roles. Intertwined within these sections are autoethnographic perspectives that contribute to the analytical interplay between data and theories. The chapter will conclude with an overview of British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian family roles and the continuing transitional aspects of negotiating those relationships and roles.

4.2 Theoretical Outlines applied to Family Roles

The family is the foundation of the extended network of relationships for the British Gujarati (BG) but this is not simply a monolithic mass. Stephane Dufoix, in his definitions of diaspora, looks at the different 'modes' of diaspora as centroperipheral, enclaved, atopic, and antagonistic.[2] The British Gujarati community is simultaneously composed of people in all four modes (2008:xv). Their conversion creates friction that specifically aggravates the disparity between the modes. This is most apparent in the family between

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[2] Explanations of the modes are detailed in the diaspora section of Chapter 2.

the second 'enclaved' and the fourth 'antagonist' modes. The 'enclaved' mode usually consists of the 1st and 1.5 generations diaspora that depend upon local concentrations of their people group. At the same time, those of the 2nd and 3rd generation diaspora are often in the 'antagonistic' mode, where there is a tendency to adapt their culture in conjunction with the host country.

The diasporic modes serve as a framework to process the conversion to Christianity as tradition transition between the British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian social fields of what constitutes the family structure. Using the idea of the family structure as a social field facilitates the use of the idea of 'habitus'. The term has been defined in Chapter 1, Section 1.4 as shared ingrained habits, tendencies and mannerisms. As a type of habitus, it exists in the family and is embodied and second nature (Bourdieu 1990:56). It exists as patterns of behaviour within the British Gujarati social fields of what constitutes a family, deliberating roles and relationships.

Alternatively, the idea of family as an institution can be discussed using de Certeau's idea of strategy (1998). He argues that institutions use strategy as a way to hold power. In this sense, as a result of the conversion of one family member, the structure of family itself goes through a transformation of tradition. While the idea of a single all-encompassing identity has been challenged by postmodernity, the concept of family continues to arise as some form of a template for social identification (Calhoun 1994:11). The Converts are confronted with two different ideas of the institution of family. These concepts of challenging tradition and self-identity and the relevance to identification will be further discussed in this chapter as different family dynamics come to light.

4.3 The British Gujarati, the British Gujarati Christian and Family Roles

In highly differentiated societies, where family is one of the primary social collectives, the repercussive effects of conversion must be mediated through multidimensional contexts. Without exception, due to the abrupt change of the symbol of the family at conversion, the British Gujarat Christian convert no longer fulfils many of the previous family roles, from the nuclear to the extended family and through the community networks. Abrupt changes of practices, roles and relationships at home are a common form of conflict experienced by British Gujarati Christians, leading to degrees of estrangement from their families. This section will detail some of the roles found within the British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian multiple generations of extended families that follow patterns of role interactions.

Raksha Gupta[3] is the eldest daughter of a 1st generation diaspora family from Gujarat. Even though she was aged six when she arrived in Britain in the 1970s, her position as the eldest daughter was to be the liaison between the traditions of Gujarat and the new way of life in Britain. Thus, the expectation placed upon her by her family was to be the primary moral role model for her immediate family and the broader British Gujarati network, even though her own most familiar role models were indigenous British children.

After conversion as a teenager, her moral role model became an embarrassment to her family in Britain and Gujarat. She left home before marriage, thus moving away from the male protection required by the moral Law of Manu and thereby damaging the moral reputation of the family. She married outside of her ethnic group, but after twenty years, the marriage ended in divorce. Her children had extremely limited benefits from any Gujarati family relationships in Britain or Gujarat. Each independent decision Raksha made from conversion onwards created a further distance from her family. She remarked, "Huh! My parents… disowned me…completely" (Raksha/inv/2) The British Gujarati family's complete misunderstanding of British Evangelical Christian culture as well as Raksha's limited understanding of her family roles resulted in her total exclusion from Raksha's natal family role structures.

By contrast, Rani Darshan[4] is the oldest *vaow*[5] in a multi-generational patrilocal family. Her conversion experience occurred in East Africa, although the challenges of her family roles continue to have repercussions in Britain. Having come to Britain as a twice migrant from Kenya, she returned to Kenya after her marriage to Mohan Darshan.[6] Upon moving into the *sassru ghar*,[7] she lived within an extended family she had not met before marriage and was the lowest in the pecking order as an outsider.

In this particular family, there are multiple homes within the extended family network. The original family home in India, the multigenerational compound home in Kenya, and the single-family dwellings in Britain are all still interconnected. Rani holds the responsibility of being the eldest *vaow* to serve and care for her parents-in-law:

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[3] See Appendix A.

[4] See Appendix A.

[5] Gujarati for daughter-in-law.

[6] Rani refers to her marriage as by introduction through her chaperoned family connections rather than the tradition of arrangement without prior interaction between the bride and groom.

[7] Gujarati for patrilocal home.

A life refers to the biographical experiences of a named person. A person is a cultural creation. Every culture, for example, has names for different types of persons: male, female, husband, wife, daughter, son, professor, student, and so forth. These names are attached to persons. Persons build biographies and identities around the experiences associated with these names. (Denzin 2013:130)

As *bhabhi*,[8] she became the outsider to her husband's younger brothers and sisters.[9] She is also *jetani*,[10] and therefore, will eventually be a senior leader. For her *derani*,[11] she is expected to set the example of how to behave once they are married and living in their future patrilocal homes and serve them and treat them as her younger sisters. These roles are further distinguished as the family is Brahmin background and considered well educated and affluent in all three continents. When she converted to Christianity, Rani's family roles as *vaow, bhabhi,* and *jetani* to model obedience, subservience and continuation of religious rituals in the home were compromised.

While the family is the social field for both Raksha Gupta and Rani Darshan, the transformation of their religious tradition impacted the way they chose to function within other institutions in their lives. As noted by Brereton (1991) women's feelings of entrapment and escape from the desperation of life meant that conversion was a means to improve their self-image and inner well-being. Here it is possible to see the correlation of the 'social field' which sounds far less rigid than de Certeau's term 'strategy'. The social field has 'rules of the game' which may be manipulated by agents (Bourdieu 1977:78). de Certeau's 'strategy' on the other hand must be tackled with a 'tactic' as a devious method of access or escape (1983:54).

In his explanation of the diaspora's cultural identity, Stuart Hall believes that those in positions of power can assert their perception of identification of the diaspora (Hall 1996:441). In this respect, those without a strong position accept their identity as determined by identification by those in positions of power. Raksha Gupta and Rani Darshan are subject to positioning by the family. They must negotiate their representations of themselves based on British Gujarati expectations that hold the gender specific symbolic capital in their respective family roles.

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[8] Gujarati for her title used by husband's siblings. The *bhabhi* is something of a playmate and something of a servant.

[9] This includes cousin brothers and cousin sisters or first cousins. It also includes other men and women of her age group in the *sassru gam* (husband's village).

[10] Gujarati for her role from her husband's younger brothers' wives to train them in the ways of home management and servitude.

[11] Gujarati for the title of her husband's younger brothers' wives.

In her new Christian identity, Raksha, influenced by her understanding of her British Evangelical Christian habitus, considered involvement in any practice with British Gujarati contrary to her new Christian beliefs. Raksha recalls, "I was afraid that if I didn't make a break from my parents, that I would be forced to marry and that there would be no church." Raksha's language suggests she was already aware of the gender and cultural disadvantage of her British Gujarati identity. She was aware of the level of opposition she believed she experienced at the time. In effect Raksha's desire to leave her parents was an attempt to unmute her religious self-identity and her gender position as a British Gujarati woman.

Mark Orbe (1995) in his approach to muted group theory uses the term 'co-cultural' referencing the marginalized who have no say in creating the dominant structure (1995:65). As a female single individual in the home, Raksha's agency is very low in terms of authority. However, at the same time, her mother was attempting to keep their idea of British Gujarati family structure intact. As a wife and mother, she had a higher agency than her daughter, but she was responsible for maintaining and reinforcing the dominant culture without having the strength of agency to alter the habitus. The social capital of the family resembles an investment. The actions of the individuals and the entire family are held in place to ensure the security of the family as a source of social capital.

Likewise, Rani Darshan engaged in a struggle against an involvement in her patrilocal family roles that she believed were connected to Hinduism. Her position coming into the patrilocal home denied her the power of representing her own identity. As a Christian, she accepted that loyalty to her new Christian community superseded her previous family roles and relationships. She further found the ability to unmute herself from her feelings of having no position or power in her patrilocal family. This is apparent in her public decision to withdraw from family events and cease participation in the annual fast for her husband's prosperity and well-being, thus impacting the patrilocal family.

Pierre Bourdieu's term 'social fields' defines the groups of people within society and can be applied to define the British Gujarati family as one group amongst various others with interactions flowing between them. The various roles, practices and relationships that connect and support both the individual and the social field of the family interconnect to other families and broader groupings through variations of practices with networks of cultural settings referred to as 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977:78). These become salient in how conversion challenges habitus in multiple British Gujarati networks. The

social field of the family is the primary arena where the change in religious self-identity and outworking of identification becomes most apparent. Family roles are held in place by cultural and ideological consensus that is reinforced by affirmative behaviour throughout social networks that are created by overlapping social fields.

Various actions garner favour within social fields, which produce social capitals as a type of symbolic currency that permits influence and agency. The agency of individuals and combinations of different individuals' agencies contribute to the use of power to influence the social fields. Unspoken yet established distinct and most treasured aspects within the social field are referred to as 'doxa' and are open to influence by 'agents'. All individuals within the social field possess some level of agency based upon various types and amounts of capitals. British Gujarati Christian religio-cultural changes in habitus are challenging to explain in the British cultural context as British Gujarati capitals and doxa appear irrelevant in the British cultural context.

In Gujarati family settings, relationships have specific names relating to expected behaviour. In indigenous British contexts, the family is nuclear or extended with less religio-cultural relevance to everyday life. For this reason, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, agency and doxa in social fields help extrapolate and analyse the data.

The next section analyses British Gujarati Christian conversion alongside family and community roles as they interact with culture. This will address how various contexts of practices influence individual and collective agencies. The benefits of social capitals in family social fields create levels of acceptance and rejection. They therefore reveal how life as a convert is navigated through the use of agency which is subject to the influence of position.

4.4 Extraction, Transition and Family Roles

Focusing on religious experience rather than doctrine, Lewis R. Rambo notes changes in family loyalty after conversion. The 'family' of God is now their home. Thus, the strongest ties of belonging and influence are relocated creating a new social field of home as a structure for belonging. The new field has new family members with roles, positions and agency. This family is often felt to be distinctive as it is eternal, spiritual and universal. It exists beyond this lifetime and therefore belonging to it surpasses the human social field of the natal family. Network connections beyond family heritage are prioritised. The sense of belonging supports the person's sense of identity and gives them a network of people to serve and of which to be a part (Rambo 1995:161). Family is the

foundational social field where the initiation of thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions are established (Bourdieu 1990).

The British Gujarati family is contradicted by the new British Evangelical Christian social field claiming a strong relational pull. However, the new social field also has more overlap with the British culture which simultaneously has a pull on the British Gujarati. The British Gujarati connection with Gujarat becomes less significant to the British Gujarati Christian. The resulting symbolic violence of the dominant voices of British Evangelical Christian and broader British culture replaces existing social order in what is commonly understood by the British Gujarati as family. Symbolic violence refers to the nonphysical power disparity between the two social groups. Bourdieu refers to it as 'a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible' (Bourdieu 2000:1). In this case, the disparity is between British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian and broader British ideas of family.

For the Convert, the indigenous British Evangelical Church is accepted as a new family. The terms 'brother and sister' and the overall relational acceptance compared to the clear separation experienced between the British Gujarati and broader British culture is bridged through genuine acceptance by those within the British Evangelical Church. The Converts are drawn to those who appear to understand and affirm their choice and become a replacement family for them as new Converts to Christianity. Thus, the new Converts create an actual distance between areas of cultural and religious activities foreign to British culture. While not uncommon amongst migrants, the Converts often change their names at baptism as was common practice with conversion in India. Raksha changed her name to Roxie. There are multiple implications to this common practice from a British Gujarati perspective.

Firstly, Raksha's position in her family home is through her identification by her name. The meaning of her given name had significance beyond her parents and siblings, but also her father's family, specifically as his sister is Raksha's *fui*. The role of the *fui* or *fui ba*[12] in name choice maintains her position of the father's sister in her natal home and the future generations of her brother's children (McDonald 1986:63). This is an example of symbolic violence to British Gujarati family roles absent in the British cultural contexts. From a British Gujarati perspective, the symbolic violence inadvertently erases, challenges and mutes the value of the customs of their family. Secondly, Raksha had a

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[12] *Fui* is the sister of the father. The oldest sister of the father, especially if she is older than her brother, is respectfully referred to as *Fui ba*. *Ba* meaning mother.

certain level of agency in the social field within her family home. She altered her agency in the British Evangelical Church context by extracting herself from her family and transitioning to the British Evangelical Christian context. However, her weakness of agency was advantageous in that the British Evangelical Christians were able to use the strength of their agency as British and part of the British Evangelical Church to pull Raksha into their social field.

The British Evangelical Christian idea of family roles uses the titles of 'brother' and 'sister' amongst those claiming membership based upon terminology used in the New Testament. In many instances, some Converts, by abandoning their natal family ties, looked to the new British Evangelical Church family of brothers and sisters to provide the kind of network of emotional, financial or cultural support that is part of the British Gujarati family.

The disconnect between British Gujarati Christians and British Evangelical Christians emerges because both are unaware of their agencies in understanding the value of family role and relationships as capitals in either social field. British Gujarati Christian transition was often met by unfulfilled expectations. Converts settle for varying degrees of long-term disassociation from their British Gujarati family. All too often, this is labelled as unavoidable persecution and considered the price of the change in self-identity to Christian. The strength of Christian religio-cultural tradition in Britain comes from its historical position within the country.

The British Evangelical Christian interpretation of family differs from the British Gujarati Christian expectation of literal family replacement. It is the Convert that chooses to extract, based on some aspect of British Evangelical Christian habitus of the binary of belonging. For example, Rani Darshan relates an argument where she believed her mother-in-law and husband 'ganged up' on her and 'threw' her out of the home. She needed a temporary home until she could get money to go back to her natal home. She approached a Western missionary's house:

> When I said to this lady, "I've become a Christian, I've been thrown out of my house." She responded, "Praise God". I thought, Praise God? because I've been thrown out? But she meant Praise God that I became a Christian. Then she said, "We feel God is telling you to go back to your family." (RaniD/inv/2)

Rani recalls her disappointment as she was expecting a literal, albeit temporary, family to replace her patrilocal family. In a traditional British Gujarati family, part of the use of multiple roles and levels of relationship serve to negotiate conflict. The family

system holds and enables individuals to act as advocates. It is often the case that British Gujarati will solicit the help of other extended family members to influence careers, marriages and conflicts. On the other hand, the Western missionary was glad Rani had joined the Christian figurative family and sent Rani back to her 'own' family perhaps to protect relationships and maintain harmony in the community. Rani accepted the advice from mature Christian leaders, honouring their role in her decision.

Likewise, Raksha Gupta decided to go to university far from home but had made no plans for accommodation. She arrived at a nearby church, expecting her 'Christian family' to provide a home. She was offered one night's stay with a church family, then applied for university housing, thus treating the Christian student group at her university as family. When Raksha returned to her parents' home, her family were celebrating Diwali. Her new habitus through the student Christian social field clashed with the enclaved British Gujarati family life and habitus. The friction in her antagonistic mode, and what had become her British Evangelical Christian habitus of binary belonging became unbearable to the point of a suicide attempt.

The similarities of familial relationship roles and support systems were expressed inside the church locale but not in the broader societal context. For the British Gujarati Christian Convert functioning outside the church in the broader societal setting, the term 'family' was translated to honouring family roles of church elders as parental figures and other congregants as brothers and sisters. This brought a relationship context with expectations to mirror the protection, provision, and support normal within the British Gujarati family.

From the perspective of the British Evangelical Church, the binary of religious belonging was in the interpretation of their confessional understanding of conversion. The community discord and broken family relationships were considered as validating the conversion experience by the British Evangelical Christians.[13] This is evidenced in my conversation with Raksha as we discussed her expectation from the church when she left for university without her parent's permission:

> Me and R talked about when we left home and went into a church, we just expected anyone in the church to just take care of us. Like when random Gujarati people showed up at our homes when we were kids. They just showed up with a suitcase from the airport. We both laughed at the ridiculousness, but longed for it in the church. (FN/U/R)

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[13] See section on British Evangelical Christian habitus in Chapter 1.

The British Gujarati diasporic experience lends itself to this aspect of Gujarati culture. However, Åsa Hole notes the Gujarati obligation to family and community is a matter of availability and reciprocity (2005). It is a type of mutual recognition of extending familial connections. Converts are often encouraged to make individual decisions. Part of the British Evangelical Christian habitus is the idea of individual choice in religious commitment rather than the inherited religious tradition. This may include what Rambo refers to as 'institutional conversion' from other Christian denominations in Britain (1993:14). For the Convert, the change of their given name is part of the expression of new life that is part of the British Evangelical Christian habitus. As individual decision making is less acceptable amongst the British Gujarati, this act is seen as a breach in the social networks that threatens the family by extraction. Furthermore, by changing to a 'Christian' name the Christian community does not spontaneously provide the transfer of network relationships. Extraction becomes symbolically hostile when the recognizable Gujarati name is abandoned and is seen as another choice independent of the family.

This section discussed issues of the extraction and transition of Converts to become a part of the British Evangelical Church. These issues appear to stem from differences in the understanding of family and family relational roles in social fields. While the Converts believed family (brotherhood, sisterhood) was understood literally, their British Evangelical Christian understanding of care and provision of the family seemed to relate solely to conversion and limited social engagement. However, it appears the British Evangelical Church expected a more significant commitment to extraction from the British Gujarati family as a separation from perceived practices of idolatry. In my research, I have interacted with at least two hundred of the three hundred Converts. In every case the Convert believed that they were taught at church that entering their family home location where idols were worshipped was a significant compromise to their identity as Christians, and that their relationship with the family home and family should be at the very least diminished and at best sacrificed. Further expressions of familial responsibility in line with religious duty are clarified in the following section.

4.5 The Convert, *Dharma,* and Family Roles

After I had already conducted most of my interviews, during one of my visits to the *mandir* in 2018, I became aware of my misinterpretation of the term *dharma*. The *maraj*

was addressing a group of American university students after a tour of *Sanatan Mandir* in North London. During the question session, one student asked:

> If I were a Hindu, what would be my religious duty? The *maraj*[14] replied, "At your age your religious duty would be to be a good student, so your family can be proud, and you can bring them respect by having a good future for your family and yourself." (FN/M/18)

I previously understood the meaning of *dharma* as the word meaning 'religion' rather than a collective familial, religious duty. I assumed this to mean personal responsibility to follow the Hindu religion. In light of my previous understanding of the term, I recalled my parents arguing with me about my conversion and telling me to pay attention to 'our *dharma*'. During my earliest interactions with Converts in 2015, I had asked about memories of conversations with family about *dharma*. The general response was that beyond understanding 'our' religious ways, the term was not mentioned. This layered account of data gathering, and analysis evoked an emergent experience that is an aspect of autoethnographic research (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011:5). I proceeded to evaluate the impact of personal actions on collective *dharma* from beyond the individual convert's perspective. The misunderstanding of *dharma* is not uncommon and is specifically addressed by Kim Knott citing a handout from a *mandir* in Leeds:

> The word Dharma is difficult to interpret as it has no equivalent in English. Dharma means that which prevents one from going down, ruining oneself in any manner whatsoever and makes for one's welfare, progress and uplift all round. The word 'Religion' does not mean 'Dharma'. Dharma means the ethical and religious ideals, social and religious duties. (Knott 1987:164)

According to Vertovec, the concept of *dharma* has at least two meanings; both as the transcendent structural order of nature and society, and the individual's actions to maintain the order (2000). It is established in individuals essentially through different roles played in the family and religious practices and rituals. In this sense there is the idea of *dharma* as virtuous behaviour and actions in line with the personal duties in line with caste (Burnett 2006:293). The interpretation of collective family *dharma* cannot be translated adequately into indigenous British Christian religious experience, and therefore there is a gap in the British Evangelical Church habitus of understanding of a British Gujarati Christian Convert's experience. This became apparent through my field notes, which I will address in this section.

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[14] *Maraj* meaning Hindu priest in the *mandir*.

From the position of the British Evangelical Christian habitus, conversion changes familial belonging for Converts and thereby releases them from responsibilities in some untranslatable British Gujarati family roles. From the British Gujarati family perspective, the forfeiture of family roles has a far more profound significance. Once British Gujarati Christian identity change is evident outside of the family home, long-term repercussions continue beyond the immediate family to broader relationship networks. A lack of family cohesion due to diaspora both in geographical and ideological movement contributes to the sense of failure in *dharmic* responsibility and weakening support systems essential for social mobility.

As I began to analyse data using field notes from the *mandir* visit, I noticed *dharma* had significant implications on family practices and roles. *Dharmic* action can be seen as part of British Gujarati habitus. While seemingly fixed, *dharma* is subtly influenced by micro-actions. In isolation micro-actions may seem irrelevant. However, marginalisation contributes to the blurring of boundaries. Marginalised areas are zones of constant change as numerous differing micro-actions develop ways to intertwine through relationships. This is perhaps a better way to understand the precarious nature of *dharma* and relate it to the idea of doxa. It becomes more apparent as the use of agency and position enable representation which then influences doxa. In this sense *dharma* and doxa have overlaps in that they both represent the highest value within the social fields. They are subject to micro-changes through agents, capitals and the flexibility of the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1977:78). *Dharma* may be simultaneously visible and invisible, unchangeable yet flexible. In terms of the role of *dharma* in mortal life the effects may be temporal, but relevant in terms of eternity.

In particular, evidence came to light in a conversation between Rani, Raksha's mother and me in Raksha's absence. Raksha's mother wept as she recalled memories of intense humiliation more than four decades old. She believed the inability back then to arrange a British Gujarati bride for their son in Britain was due to Raksha's deviant behaviour. She used the term '*nikri gay ti*', which in colloquial Gujarati means 'when she left'. The word '*nikr*' also means to 'remove'. I discovered in the formal language '*nikāla gayā tī*' means 'when they were disposed of'.[15] For Raksha's mother, the religio-cultural damage of her daughter's extraction caused catastrophic damage to the whole family's *dharma* (FN/U/RD/Mrs.G).

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[15] https://translate.google.com [accessed 20-11-2019]

Raksha's mother's idea of family within the British Gujarati locale was defined by a particular strategic framework. The accepted British Gujarati norms of collective *dharma* are less known to the 1.5 and 2nd generation British Gujarati diaspora. This means individual choice by the Convert is considered a significant deviance from the family collective *dharma*. According to Marshall B. Clinard and Robert F. Meier, "The notion of deviance is some difference from a social standard in behaviour, conditions, and people" (2015:26). Arguably, the notion of 'some difference' minimizes what Raksha's mother's response reveals as a serious violation by British Gujarati Christianity in the context of their *dharmic* social field.

In terms of habitus, 'some difference' might be considered positive and, therefore, constructive. However, deviance may be seen as symbolic violence in terms of the two different social fields of family. Each social field held an expectation based on their own understanding of what was acceptable within their respective field boundaries. Therefore, it is not the deviance of an individual act, but an affront to the social field of family (Burawoy 2018:387). The perceived capacity of the British Evangelical Church's ability to subjugate is as an aspect of habitus that is deeply embedded into the British Gujarati idea of family structure (Richard 1998).

Looking at perceived deviance and symbolic violence as actions contrary to British Gujarati norms reveals how families are affected leading to multiple levels of repercussions or micro-changes in habitus. Listening as a Convert to stories of a family attempting to contain the deviant behaviour damage primarily evoked my feelings of sympathy (albeit subjective) toward the Convert. Initially my sympathy had lain only with Raksha at the thought of her wanting to end her life because her parents refused to allow her to make an individual choice of religious identity. However, having spent time with the British Gujarati community during my research, and connecting with Raksha's mother and other British Gujarati families, I began to comprehend the extent to which the whole family is affected by the independent religious choice of one individual. The very act of speaking of the incident forty years later was in itself due to the change in habitus for the British Gujarati to unmute unspeakable personal shame.

As 2nd generation migrants, like Raksha, our understanding of individual independence came from our British socialisation. For us, this meant family roles, representations and religious duties appeared less critical. From the 1st generation migrant parents, their movement from one location to another was merely geographical to take advantage of available resources and not to challenge their ideology. Hence, the

long-term repercussions to collective *dharma* had no significance to us as British Gujarati Christian Converts at that time.

Negotiating family roles was nuanced in various relationships between British Gujarati Christians and British Gujarati during my stay in Jimvum.[16] I noticed the seemingly fixed family roles for British Gujarati Christians initially seemed very rigid when interpreted through the British cultural lens. However, there was room for flexibility depending on the relationship. The challenges of rigidity and flexibility of family roles became visible during my interactions with the three generations of British Gujarati Christian Converts. Changes in position and representation, habitus and agency filtered into multiple identities and social fields.

4.6 Multiple Generation Conversion and Family Roles

In this section, I will focus on data from one extended family. Their changes in relationships, rituals, rhetoric and roles are clear signs of the tradition transformation aspect of conversion. Rani Darshan's conversion was the catalyst that challenged the family roles of three generations of her patrilocal and natal families. In her family role as a Hindu, Rani took a great deal of pride in her commitment to ritual practices on behalf of the patrilocal family. Initially, her cessation of practise was considered a minor infringement that subsequently widened the gap as Rani withdrew from all British Gujarati religio-cultural practices. Rani had self-identified as Christian and thus changed her habitus and agency with the social fields amongst the British Gujarati and the church community for six years prior to her husband's conversion.

Members of Rani's British Gujarati and the Converts in the family cite her unhappiness as an 'outsider' in her patrilocal family as the reason for her conversion (AnandD/inv/1, JayeshD/inv/1). Living in Kenya in a multigenerational patrilocal home, married to the eldest son and mother of two infant daughters, Rani believed her role in the home was under scrutiny: "I was always looked down upon, I could never please her," [referring to her *sasu*][17] (Rani/inv/1). Relationships between *sasu* and *vaow*[18] commonly fuel arguments that create tension influencing negotiations in networks (Raval 2009). Rani's sense of position and representation reveals her understanding of her lack of agency in her social fields. Furthermore, her sense of entrapment and feelings of being

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[16] Pseudonym for location.

[17] *Sasu* means mother-in-law.

[18] *Vaow* means daughter-in-law.

unloved were evident to others in the patrilocal and natal families and considered reasons for her conversion.

While her husband, Mohan, was overseas, Rani wrote him a letter explaining she was attending church and believed exclusively in Christianity. Initially, Mohan was unconcerned as he explains:

> I said, that's fine if that's what you want to do. That was the early days. But when I went to Nairobi, it started to have an impact on my life. In the sense on Sundays, Rani and the kids would go off to church every Sunday. I tried to influence the children just say, "Don't go with your mum. We'll go out. I'll take you to parks, give you nice food and stuff. " They chose their mum, so that was now getting very annoying. (MohanD/inv/1)

Mohan was expected to control his wife's rebellion to refuse participation or attend family and community religious or cultural events. The extended family's passive aggressive acts impacted their daughters, Bhanu and Kanta, as they felt compelled to support their mother. Bhanu recalls:

> It was very difficult. They didn't like us going to church, and so there would be conflict between them and my mum. And, I think they weren't nice to my mum. So, my dad's side of the family, his mum and brother and the wife, and my dad's sister as well were really horrible to my mum. So, my mum was constantly being upset. We saw her crying, and me and my sister have to go through…and I felt like when I look back, it's really painful, so we **had** to grow up. **We had to be there for her even though we were little kids**. Yeah, she was constantly crying and constantly warning us. You know, "**Be careful what you say! Don't do this! Don't do that!**" They would just get angry with us.[19] (BhanuD/inv/1)

Rani explained she suffered accusations against her of using malevolent spirits that were the cause of her *derani's* [20] infertility:

> I said to my sister-in-law, "I've prayed to Jesus and Jesus will give you a child." She turned around and told everyone, "Rani has cursed me. She said that I would never have a child. " And that went around the whole of Nairobi, and their relative circle they say, "Rani cursed her, she can't have kids." (Rani/inv/2)

Her *diyr,*[21] Jayesh recounted the same details in his narrative (Jayesh/inv/1). Both Rani and her *derani* are *vaow* brought from their respective natal homes. Both of Rani's excerpts show the differences in agency, positional representation in this patrilocal

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[19]Bold script denotes the speaker's raised voice and emphasis in the recording.

[20]*Derani* is the husband's younger brother's wife.

[21]*Diyr* is the husband's younger brother.

family. The patrilocal culture permitted both Rani and the younger *vaow* to be returned to their natal homes. Rani could be returned, due to her rebellion, and the younger *vaow,* because of her infertility. By accusing Rani of using evil spirits, the patrilocal family was innocent of the breakdown of the marriages. However, they did not send either of them back to their respective natal homes, perhaps for fear of further damage to their networks and collective *dharma,* as all would bear some of the shame of the divorced women by association. The repercussions of macro-aggression would bring longer lasting damage to the current and future collective *dharma.* Alternatively, there could always be a claim for choosing compassion, causing both natal families to feel indebted and thus in a somewhat vulnerable position.

Representational power and agency in terms of the new religious identity is evident when Rani used her position as a Christian and asked a Punjabi Christian friend to influence her husband to visit a Bible study group in his home. Mohan agreed to attend out of a position of respect for his friend, resulting in his conversion. Mohan's conversion soon led his parents, sister and two nephews to convert, and all were baptised at the same time. Once Mohan converted to Christianity, family loyalty was questioned by the broader extended family. According to Mohan, they believed Rani had influenced him, and he influenced his parents.

While men hold positions of authority, the less obvious power of the women adapts behaviour to create alternate patterns as they are the 'ritual gatekeepers' (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 1999:162). While the symbolic capital of the eldest son offers rewards of inheritance and honour, his responsibilities include setting examples for his, and forthcoming generations. The value and scarcity of symbolic capitals and their uses in networks contribute positively and negatively to various social fields of the family.

With Mohan, three distinct ideas of negotiation interplay; firstly, Mohan as a British Gujarati in East Africa and Britain is living in multiple modes of diasporic identities with valuable relationships. In his household, there are several different simultaneous modes of diasporic identities. His wife Rani is the first convert and is relocated due to marriage. Her position and representation in the house are restricted through her relationships centred on the patrilocal home. The anthropologist, Stuart Hall, theorises that those who can present the diaspora choose the perspective from which they represent, based on their position of power (1996:223).

Secondly, Mohan in his role as the oldest son, educated, and heir, has influence, position and representation that allows him to choose his religious identity in and for his

family. By living in Britain, the gradual alterations and adjustments in habitus lead to changes in ideology that support new doxa. On the other hand, the variations of habitus reveal the multiple modes of ideological diaspora. The host culture becomes more relevant, and the culture of origin becomes less significant, hence Mohan's agency in multiple social fields was very high.

Thirdly, Mohan's ability to choose his identity applied in his identification of his parents as those who need to change their identity to Christians. Such is the position and agency of Mohan, his parents, his sister and her sons all decided to change their ritual religious practices, convert and take baptism. The power of Mohan's position is such that even his sister, whose primary authority structure is in her patrilocal home, is willing to change her own religious identity. This shows Mohan's sister still possessed agency in her natal home as she took part in baptism. She used her agency in her natal home against the position she held in her patrilocal home. Her actions reveal that specific standards may appear as solid objective practices. These are referred to as doxa (Bourdieu 1977:16). However, within the social field, doxa is open to influence by individual 'agents', all of whom possess some level of agency.

Aspects of British Gujarati religio-cultural habitus that are affected by conversion are challenging to explain in the British cultural context. Each family (and each individual in the family) hold differing positions, representation, habitus and agency within multiple diasporic modes and identities. Rani was peripheral in her position as an incoming bride and then a convert because of the negotiation of roles within the British Gujarati family. However, as her patrilocal family converted, her capital was unexpectedly increased within the home. In the wider British Gujarati communities in Kenya and Britain, Rani's cultural capital may be questionable, yet it is influenced positively due to her husband's profession and her children's academic and career successes.

The enculturation of British Gujarati family members to roles is the responsibility of the *sasu*,[22] who uses her agency for promotion within the family. Her years as an 'outsider' diminish as births, deaths, and marriages occur. Gradually she becomes the mother of a son, *jetani*[23] to incoming younger *vaow* and then the *sasu*.[24] The first *vaow*[25] acknowledges the *sasu* as a powerful insider of the family (Åsa Hole 2005). As the next

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[22] *Sasu* is the mother-in-law.

[23] *Jeht* is the husband's older brother, *Jehtani* is the wife of *Jeht.*

[24] *Sasu* is the mother-in-law.

[25] *Vaow* is the daughter-in-law.

generation are born, the *sasu* begins her retreat to more distinguished honorary roles, primarily as grandsons are born.

Initially, the agency of *sasu* over *vaow* comes with the position to use threats of expulsion of *vaow* from the patrilocal home. This is a concern for parents of married daughters as the repercussions can reach beyond the family. The daughter's brothers have varying expectations to mediate, protect and provide should threats of expulsion of their sister from her marital home become a reality. Men's family roles and their relationship to the Convert or being a Convert took on distinctly different features. These changes impacted relationships within the immediate family and beyond.

What may initially seem an individual's personal religious choice reverberates with possibilities of internal conflict in the British Gujarati family beyond the individual and the immediate family. The extended community and even networks that connect the British Gujarati social fields are perceived to have suffered possibilities of relational damage. The social fields are not limited to the temporal but also the cyclical impact upon future generations, hence the impact of agency and position go beyond the present to connect with the *samsara*.[26]

The challenge of family roles from Rani's perspective is detailed in the above section. Rani's husband's conversion six years later reveals actions challenging traditional ideas of power, position, capitals and habitus. The following section will bring in the perspectives of Rani's conversion from her husband, children and other members of her patrilocal family, revealing how perceptions of position and agency can be viewed differently from the diversity of family relationships.

4.7 Conflict in Family Roles as a Result of Conversion

In this section, the effects of conversion on sonship, friendship, filial and social position, and community relationships are illustrated. The doxa of social fields, while perhaps unstated, are held in place by those with the highest agency. Once rules of a social field as understood and accepted by all are challenged, the rules become more visible and must be either reinforced or adapted. The story of Mohan will demonstrate this more specifically.

Family members confronted Mohan regarding Rani's behaviour after her conversion. This left him exasperated as his position as husband conflicted with his

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[26] *Samsara* is the cycle of life and death to which the material world is bound.

position as dutiful son. He felt powerless to change his wife and unable to please his parents by using his position of authority. On his return from Britain to the enclaved (diaspora) mode in Kenya, his parents forced him to confront his wife's antagonistic (ideological diaspora) mode.

The strain of Rani's perceived deviant habitus was counterbalanced by Mohan's business and *dharmic* successes. He and his brother Jayesh were fulfilling *ashrama*[27] roles as 'householders' through business, thus reaping rewards of their earlier stage as 'students'. Together they increased cultural, social and economic capitals through fulfilling familial responsibilities, success in business and joining the Freemasons to broaden their networks for further success. Rani gave birth to a son, increasing her personal and the family's social capital.

Mohan's brother Jayesh bore 'some measure of resentment' toward Rani when Mohan stopped attending Freemason gatherings (JayeshD/inv/1). Initially Mohan, like Rani, rejected everything connected with Hinduism. Mohan explains a change in his thinking:

> Mohan: Then as I read the Bible, I read, where let the Jew be a Jew? Yeah, then I saw people like Paul they didn't stop being Jewish. They continued to practice Jewish customs. They went to the synagogue. Jesus went to the synagogue. So, I said then I should do that for my people. I can go too. Mind you, I have been embarrassed. I went to a '*cathha*'[28] at my relative's house. As he was serving everyone food. He…he...aah bypassed me. Left me with empty plate.
>
> Mohan: So, you know when you get served?
>
> Usha: You mean the *prasad*?[29]
>
> Mohan: **No! The main meal!** He said he was serving everybody. **He bypassed me!**[30] I'm there with my plate. He just continued. He just ignored me… and I did find that… very insulting… I just left. (MohanD/inv/2)

The public humiliation was very personal and a dramatic symbol of violence. By conversion, Mohan was seen by his relative to reject his position in the birth family and their *dharma* in favour of Christianity. Initially, Mohan had attempted to keep both identities during his visits to churches in England. However, back in his home in Kenya,

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[27] *Ashrama* is the stage of religious duty.

[28] *Cathha* is gathering in the home where a local *maraj* (priest) from the public *mandir* read from a sacred text and performs various rituals.

[29] *Prasad* refers to food placed in front of images of deities and then shared amongst the people as a blessing. It is common for BGC to refuse to partake in *prasad*. As a gesture of respect, some Hindus do not offer it to those they know to be Christian.

[30] Bold script denotes the speaker's raised voice and emphasis in the recording.

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like his wife, he redefined his religio-cultural practices to what he believed to be in line with his conversion identity as he was attending one specific church and could not remain anonymous. His return to something of the duality of culture by attending a Hindu religio-cultural event was met with unexpected friction. Mohan's choice to attend had been influenced by a recent change in approaches to Evangelical conversion practices.[31]

Relying on traditions of family roles, Mohan's parents though converted to Christianity, had maintained their religio-cultural relationships since their baptism. They used their agency and acted as arbitrators to resolve the incident. Mohan stated his parents told him the relative said: "*Eh san mateh aya aveh? Enu aveh su kam apra satheh?*" "Why does he come here? What is his purpose/job with us now?" (MohanD/inv/2). This remark may reveal the host's embarrassment at having a family member of such high status humiliate him at his religious gathering. The host displayed his religious piety in front of his Hindu peers in order to maintain his position to represent himself as a BG. His 'in group' public behaviour defined the framework of his strategy of authority.

Even though Mohan's parents had also converted, their age and influence over the younger generation and their maintaining polite presence at family events after conversion gave them the necessary agency, position and symbolic capital. The seniority of the parents garners enough agency for the matriarch to continue dressing traditionally and wearing a large red *chandlo*[32] symbolising her marital status. This shows some of the flexibility of habitus that comes with status and agency within the British Gujarati social fields.

Forms of capital may be adapted by relationship, gender, age and profession in different practices, relationships and roles. Mohan was publicly devalued by an act which while forgiven will never be forgotten. This occurrence is indelibly linked to his Christian experience, as part of the idea of forgiveness and repentance.[33] However, Bourdieu argues symbolic violence is "irreversible and irrevocable" (Burawoy 2018:387).

This case study involved family roles in large, influential community networks. Where parents are absent or less influential or British Gujarati families with reduced capitals, there is a difference in negotiation of roles and the social fields of interaction.

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[31] The shift in conversion practices by Evangelical missionaries began in 1998 with the Insider Movement through a publication by John Travis in *Evangelical Mission Quarterly,* 1998. See section of BEC habitus in Chapter 1.

[32] *Chandlo* is the Gujarati word for mark applied to the forehead of a married woman. It is also applied to people in religious ceremonies.

[33] See section BEC Habitus in Chapter 1.

This will be evident in the following section, where the women were unmarried at the time of the change in religious identity.

4.7.1 Marriage after Conversion

The presence of British Gujarati parents helps to contribute to social capital. Each agent not only has social capital in the field, but capital is increased by interaction thus giving rise to increased affirmation in social identification within the social field. By the age of seventeen both of Vina's parents had passed away, leaving her under the care of her older siblings. On her first day at a new job, Vina met someone on the train who began speaking to her about Christianity. By coincidence when she arrived at work, she found it was one of her new company's directors who had been speaking to her. In her narrative, Vina recollected the different type of male leadership and compared it to her family hierarchy:

> And, you know, it was funny, even when… him being a financial director and it was a top job; he never looked down on other people within the company that were lower than him. He accepted everybody. He talked to everybody. There was always a smile on his face. (Vina/inv/1)

Vina started attending a Christian group gathering[34] with other British Evangelical Christians at the financial director's family home:

> When I started going to the house group and started going to the church, they [siblings] were concerned about me. They thought I was becoming westernised, or I have got a boyfriend, or I might have been involved…with him… you know. (Vina/inv/1)

At this point, there are two different sets of rules in play as to what constitutes family authority in the overlapping social fields. As conversion is rumoured amongst British Gujarati as an excuse to marry without family consent, her siblings' concerns were that Vina would damage the symbolic capitals of the family.

Vina believes assumptions of her naivety and deception led to her siblings conspiring to persuade her to meet with marriage candidates and lure her from church. Vina was locked in her room and threatened with violence when she told them of her plans to be baptised. Her siblings and cousin brothers concocted elaborate fabrications about their sister overseas being close to death on two occasions. This aggressive act violated all sense of individual agency in British society. Her siblings' attempt was to

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[34] Commonly referred to as a 'house group' within the British Evangelical Church.

control the damage of her conversion to the collective family reputation (FN/Vina/1). In this situation, it is possible to see symbolic violence as violation of both the British Gujarati family and the British Evangelical church family. The degree of actual violence was a cause for great concern amongst British Evangelical Christians.

As a single woman, Vina had less social capital than Rani Darshan. This meant Vina's conversion had less impact on their British Gujarati community networks. Agency in the British Gujarati family was replaced by agency in the British Evangelical church 'family' as Vina relied on Christian friends to advise her and pray against an arranged marriage.[35] The British Evangelical Christians assumed a position of family-like authority to advocate on Vina's behalf with little understanding of her British Gujarati family dynamics, but stepped in to prevent further violence. Through her conversion she overcame her feelings of entrapment as a British Gujarati woman. Having witnessed the level of aggression displayed, the British Evangelical Christians protected Vina and influenced her to marry someone who shared her religious identity as a Christian with the very best of intentions.

Reflecting on Vina's narrative, her sense of self worth had diminished greatly in early childhood when her father passed away and her mother and many siblings were left at the mercy of her *motakaka*[36] and the *mandir* for survival. Her feelings of abandonment increased at the death of her mother. Her conversion experience satisfied her desire for a father figure, common in the women's conversion stories (Brereton 1991).

In Vina's case, there is an alternate use of Hall's theory of cultural identity through position and representation. Vina's position in the social fields of the British Gujarati family and the British Evangelical Church's family were low. Her British Gujarati family could not arrange a marriage for her with a British Gujarati, neither was she comfortable finding her own spouse as is common amongst the British Evangelical Christians. Even though there was a change in habitus and agency, and position, the ability to choose her own spouse was still strongly connected to cultural identification by British Gujarati.

For the British Gujarati in the enclave mode, to choose one's own spouse is a self-representation revealing a disregard for family symbolic capital, agency, and position. The British Gujarati's subjective use of doxa, capital and agency are therefore carefully manipulated. The rules of the game are thus easier to manage from a position of power that comes through layers of social capital based amongst other things on gender.

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[35] Prayer is explained in the section of British Evangelical Christian Habitus in Chapter 1.

[36] *Motakaka* means older paternal uncle.

In this section, the relevance of singleness, marriage, social position within the family, and of the family, highlight the differences in cultural expectations that are challenged in conversion. An added dimension to the independent choice of a marriage partner is further accentuated by Vina's marriage to a widower and adoption of a disabled infant, revealing a level of selfless commitment to the British Gujarati idea of *dharmic* responsibility. The following section will show how disability positions agency with the British Gujarati family and community whilst at the same time having a strong influence in the British Evangelical Church. This connects the ideas of family roles in the British Gujarati context and family roles as understood in British Evangelical Christian contexts.

4.7.2 Disability and Conversion

In this section, the challenges of disability, conversion and gender display alternate ways of negotiating family roles in multiple social fields in conversion. Minakshi's conversion and subsequent roles within her family and the British Evangelical Church and British Gujarati Christian networks are connected to her personal acceptance of her status as a disabled woman. Her attitude toward her disability became a positive factor within her parents', siblings' and Christian networks.

Minakshi is the second oldest child of a family of nine children from Kenya. She is the oldest daughter and has a physical disability due to a childhood illness. When Minakshi was around nine years old, her mother was pressured by her *jetani* [37] to seek out a prophetess of Mataji[38] for a miraculous healing of Minakshi's disability. As the *jetani* was the wife of the family patriarch, Minakshi's mother had to comply. Prophetic utterances occur when a local woman, considered a channel for the presence of a goddess, goes into a trance after a particularly intense time of melodic chanting. Different instructions are given to people in hopes of miraculous solutions for issues such as fertility, marital, business or health problems (Gadon 2004; Burghart 1987).

Shortly after the failed attempt of healing, Minakshi's father saw an advertisement for a healing meeting held by Christians and decided to take Minakshi. Even though she was once again not healed, Minakshi continued to attend church with her siblings. She

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[37] *Jetani* means older brother-in-law's wife.

[38] *Mataji* means respected mother but is one of the names for goddess Durga.

saw the authority of family hierarchy influencing her father as she recalls the pressure of her *motakaka*[39] on her father. She recollected a conversation she overheard between them:

> So sometimes my uncle would say, "Where are you going?" and we would say, "We're going to church." [*she and her younger siblings*] and he got angry. He would take us to the temple, we refused to bow to the idols, and he would go to my father and shout at him. He would get very, very angry. I remember once he was so very angry…my father was a shopkeeper and he [*motakaka*] banged on… we have the glass cabinet, and he broke it. He said he won't come to my home. They won't drink water from my home because we are poison in my home because we are polluted. (MinakshiS/inv/1)

Minakshi's father bore the brunt of anger from his older brother as patriarch. As Minakshi's father moved the family to India, he believed, "*Ishu na bhoot kadi ne sida rasto avijay*" (MinakshiS/inv/1), meaning the Jesus ghost or spirit would be removed, and they would come onto the straight path. The connection between the home and the public *mandir* is not simply through religious rituals performed in front of the icons as these are by personal preference. The purity of the home has a path that moves from pollution to purity as illustrated in this diagram:

POLLUTED = Toilet > Bathroom > Bedroom > Common Areas > Living Room > Dining Room > Kitchen > Worship Area = PURE (adapted from Åsa Hole 2005:122).

Bodily waste is the furthest from the act of worship as the perception of God in Hinduism and Christianity is the ultimate in purity. The balance of pollution and purity between people is understood in the shared habits of those who use the toilet, bathroom and bedroom areas within the home. Ablution practices are taught and shared by parents, siblings and those that live within the household and the necessary precursor to worship practices.

The stereotype of Christian behaviour held by Hindus is that the Christian patterns of cleanliness from pollution to purity are absent. The wearing of shoes inside a place of worship is one such pattern that is misinterpreted. This is furthered by the concern that the public disregard for purity in the place of worship means that the same behaviour patterns would be not merely replicated in the home, but that the route from ablutions to worship would not exist.

The knowledge that Christians do not keep the same paths of cleanliness and contamination thus rearranges how family members are able to continue to function

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[39] *Motakaka* means older paternal uncle.

amongst the connected family households. Hinduism in India is an all-encompassing ideological social field that maintains normative organized social relations. Its ideals were assumed transportable by appropriate behaviour through imitation in the diasporic context. However, the movement of people from one location to another means the conscious and subconscious habitus influence ideology. By returning to India, Minakshi's father believed that the children would be taught the appropriate behaviour that would adapt to their parent's world view and thus ideology through lifestyle amongst those of their own people group.

It was through a continued relationship with Minakshi and her Christian colleagues from the Christian student mission that her family members changed their religious identity. This suggests that a change in religious self-identity does not come only through group belonging and social identification but also from interaction. Interface with Hindu practices in India is not conscious, but absorbed from the cultural practices around. However, upon arriving in India, Minakshi connected with other Evangelical Christians who made a deliberate effort to communicate Christianity with Minakshi's family.

Barth argues that multiple overlapping interchanges have a stronger ability to influence identification through the flexibility of cultural boundaries and content (Barth 1969). The idea of the 'straight path' is thus a nominal identification or label (Jenkins 2004:22). The virtual identification, as in the actual action, meant that the comprehension of what is considered the straight path was open to interpretation based on relationship in two different social fields.

While in Kenya, Minakshi and her siblings, under the nominal label of Hindu, had pushed the understanding of the multiplicity of ways to connect with God by choosing to attend the church. As a result, their father's belief was that greater immersion in India would decrease the influence of Christianity. However, the children had patterns of behaviour that connected them to Christians in India. While surrounded by Hinduism, Hindu and clearly Indian, their virtual[40] identity practices were Christian. The overlap of the two social fields meant the geographical moves of Minakshi's family from India to Kenya and back to India and eventually to Britain reveal that certain aspects of ideological influences are maintained, and others diminished, though not necessarily permanently.

Minakshi used her agency within both social fields to establish relationships, roles and rituals with a great degree of flexibility. Her actions revealed an awareness of the important cultural markers in both fields and the characterisation one group had of the

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[40] In this sense the word 'virtual' refers to actual practised as opposed to 'nominal' as labelled.

other. Furthermore, as the label of 'disability' is an external categorisation in both social fields, it brings subconscious limitations by others of Minakshi's agency. Her conversion to Christianity was less of a threat to the symbolic capital of the family. Disability is often considered the result of actions in the past life and generally kept hidden from the community. In this respect the manipulation of *dharma* as religious duty and *karma* as consequence of past behaviour meant that Minakshi's conversion becomes acceptable.

Minakshi believes her parents were satisfied that she remained committed to the family by setting what they believed was a good culturally appropriate moral example for her siblings by continuing to maintain familial ethical, dietary, dress and language traditions. She was able to help the family adapt to new lives because of connections to Britain through the British Evangelical Christian networks she made in India.

This is an example of the use of Hall's idea of cultural identity being influenced by the power of position and representation. Minakshi's choice to identify as Christian was not especially an issue of social capital within the British Evangelical Church setting. However, it was a point whereby the church was able to accept her as a person whom they could serve in a way that the *mandir* did not; thus, increasing their capitals specifically in terms of how Minakshi's family perceived the Church. In this respect, while the position of the disabled offers low personal representation by the nature of disability itself, the lack of representation offers higher agency and influences change of habitus in both social fields.

The British Evangelical Christians' care and consideration of disability and sickness were also a factor in the conversion process of Rina Divya's mother. As a 2nd generation diaspora and 1st generation teenager convert, Rina Divya's Convert identity and agency amongst the British Gujarati was affirmed through the kindness of someone from the British Evangelical Church. Daily visits to her family home were made during and after Rina's younger sister with Down's syndrome was dying of cancer. The British Evangelical Church habitus of care for the sick had a positive impact on how their symbolic capital and doxa was perceived by the British Gujarati. The habitus of British Gujarati can be manipulated by the concerns of purity and pollution and *karma:*

> His family blamed me for her Down's and cancer, so even though he left me and was with another woman, it was my fault. They didn't didn't give a shit. They sided that bastard who couldn't be with us when his own daughter died. (Urvashi/inv/1)

The lack of appropriate support and consideration is completely morally reprehensible, yet this British Gujarati extended family use *karma* and *dharma* at will.

The British Evangelical Church habitus of appropriate distance between pollution and purity had positive repercussions on the British Gujarati that led to Rina's mother's conversion.

Minakshi's symbolic capital is such that her agency is recognised in multiple networks. Within the British Evangelical Church, she is a valued leader as a support to many of the British Gujarati Christian and other British South Asian Converts. She is also a key contact for churches and mission agencies to connect with British South Asian communities and the Converts. Within the British Gujarati community, apart from her role as honorary matriarch, Minakshi continues the 1st generation migrant traditions of dress, language and vegetarian diet. Aspects of her self-identity that she has been able to craft have become valuable cultural capital especially as an access point to British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian culture. Her strength of agency is through doxa upheld without necessarily taking a visible leadership role.

In both the British Gujarati and broader British social fields, the care of the disabled, especially by choice, is considered sacrificial and honourable. Disability in British Gujarati religio-cultural understanding is connected to previous incarnations. For example, as a Brahmin, Vina's adoption of her husband Andrew's son Jon is an act of superior sacrifice that has value in her personal *dharma* and collective *dharma* of her British Gujarati family. The independent act of personal sacrifice is also recognised as having value in the British Evangelical Church context.[41] This continues into the broader British context. The care of a disabled person by choice increases agency and is, therefore, a positional shift in representation. Hence, it could be argued that the vulnerability of position has its own manner of influence. Vina's agency with her British Gujarati family became stronger when she represented the best interests of another vulnerable family member and dealt with a sensitive family issue.

In this section, the relevance of disability is negotiated using the doxa of two social fields, each with some overlapping habitus in terms of accepting disability. Disability was a crisis point for those in authority over Minakshi more than for Minakshi herself. In the British Gujarati social field and the British Evangelical church social field, it is her own acceptance that influences habitus and thus impacts the doxa in the areas of overlap. The unspoken established doxa in both social fields see the limitations of disability without being able to fix the situation as an anomaly.

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[41] See section British Evangelical Christian Habitus in Chapter 1.

While disability, along with gender, conversion and the death of Minakshi's father were hinderances to the family's social mobility from British Gujarati perspective, there was a positive impact on the family's collective symbolic capitals. Minakshi was able to make her own choices that increased her agency and changed doxa. Similarly, Vina chose to marry a widower and adopt his disabled son, revealing the symbolic capital of self-sacrifice that is valued in British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian social fields. By simultaneously respecting some traditions and maintaining a commitment to religious identity as Christian through adjusting habitus, both Minakshi and Vina increased social capitals and influenced doxa in their social fields. Their use of agency created symbolic capital and brought new habitus, influencing doxa that overlapped both social fields.

The following section will explore the ways symbolic capitals in British Gujarati social fields are replicated, reinforced and readjusted in family roles through a celebratory event. The positional roles of brother and sister relationships are rearranged through multiple varieties of influence that re-position and re-present a British Gujarati tradition connecting their country of origin and the different modes of the British Gujarati diaspora.

4.7.3 *Rakshabandan* and the Thread of Family Roles

Negotiation of family roles in micro-contexts is more common but more difficult to establish, especially as the nuances may be less visible in British cultural practices. Because it is occurring within a culture where there is no comparative cultural phenomenon, for the British Gujarati Christian convert *Rakshabandan* shifts from a macro-context to a micro-context event. *Rakshabandan* becomes irrelevant as part of a set of cultural practices that are disconnected from the new conversion identity. This tradition transition aspect of the British Gujarati Christian familial roles affects religio-cultural ritual practices. *Rakshabandan* represents familial, public, communal and ritual representations of family roles. It is a gesture rather than a sacred ritual that makes a connecting social network identification. This was apparent from the broad range of understanding of the background and purpose of *Rakshabandan*, in which the gesture of giving the *rakhi,* giving or receiving a gift and acknowledging the relationships between siblings and voluntary siblings was key.

The data from the *Rakshabandan* questionnaire will be used in this section to show the correlation of family role adaptations. The section on British Gujarati habitus in the introductory chapter has given details of the background of *Rakshabandan* and adjustments of religious, cultural and celebratory observations used by their communities.

Over time, some Converts began to re-engage with British Gujarati family celebrations. For other Converts, even those cultural rituals that bore little or no significance to British Gujarati religious beliefs were not observed or clearly rejected. Changes in the way *Rakshabandan* was observed after conversion gave one a glimpse into something of the mediation of family roles.

4.7.3.1 British Gujarati Christian *Rakshabandan* Practices

The British Gujarati continue to observe *Rakshabandan* practices although migration has brought changes. Even though the continuity of *Rakshabandan* as a gesture of relational commitment that does not exist in the same way in the British culture, the British Gujarati have successfully modified the observance (Åsa Hole 2005:279). The meaning of *Rakshabandan* has no translation in British Evangelical Church culture. Firstly, there is no context of the natal and patrilocal home as the gendered role after marriage. Secondly, there is no connection with a myth that relates to keeping a promise of protection that has been translated through an annual festival.[42]

The decline of fifty per cent of British Gujarati Christian converts' *Rakshabandan* observance indicates a significant shift in the customary practices between brother and sister after conversion. Of the fifteen British Gujarati Christian women in the questionnaire, six no longer practise the custom. This significant loss of a cultural practice impacts the perception of the value of the brother-sister bond. This was evident in the significant change in relationships with the brothers in each of the families of Raksha Gupta, Rani Darshan, Vina Gregario and my own.

The acknowledgement of historical participation in *Rakshabandan* was evident amongst every British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian I have spoken to both during and prior to beginning this research project. The decrease in the Converts' practise of *Rakshabandan* are indicative of cultural extraction. The cessation of the religio-cultural practice reveals significant symbolic violence occurring as appropriate to the new British Gujarati Christian Convert identity by the Converts themselves.

For example, one British Gujarati man[43] no longer observed *Rakshabandan* in any way as his brother and sister were Converts and discontinued the celebration. The fracture in his family relationship networks was evident in his insistence that, "It doesn't matter, I

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[42] The idea of offering protection and kindness to a victim of violence, sickness or bereavement is part of the BEC habitus as discussed in the section British Evangelical Christian Habitus in Chapter 1.

[43] See Appendix J, *Rakshabandan* Questionnaire.

don't care, I am ok by myself". (FN/R) However, when asked the question regarding his understanding of the meaning of *Rakshabandan*, he replied:

> It's about brother sister love. You tie this *rakhi*, give money as a promise you know for future help or anything, but mostly in the 'take care of' idea, like even after parents or husband or whatever die or something that might be a problem. Brother takes care of sister, you know? (FN/R)

The brother's acceptance of his sibling's choices suggests that he believed the change in practice was a requirement of Christian identity. It is more likely to be based upon the Convert siblings' understanding of separating themselves from practices that are not distinctly Christian.

Rakshabandan is a symbolic affirmation of roles representative of support should the need arise. It is a reiteration of security, safety and belonging that simultaneously defines, affirms and stretches the networks. In this instance, it appears that the elimination of this practice was symbolic violence as it destroyed habitus to the degree that British Gujarati family roles were permanently split. In the cases of Jivan, Prakash and Manesh who continue to receive the *rakhi* from their sisters, there is an ongoing pattern of social interaction on specific religio-cultural celebrations, including birthdays, Christmas and Easter. The position of Converts, in this instance, reveals the power to represent and therefore eliminate the positional representation of the British Gujarati individual and collective identity.

4.7.3.2 Religious Interpretation of *Rakshabandan*

The questionnaire revealed none of the respondents could recall any formal instruction on the origins of *Rakshabandan*. This confirmed the notion that religious rituals and beliefs are replicated without clearly articulated theology. Beyond the religious, mythological characters, there were some mentions of battles between Hindus and Muslims with the custom of tying the *rakhi* as a sign for peace between either a Muslim general and a Hindu woman or a Hindu general and a Muslim woman.

One British Gujarati Christian believed *Rakshabandan* is religious, while four believe it is an Indian tradition. Five of all thirty Converts believe the custom is connected to religio-cultural practices in India. The main items used in the celebration are the *rakhi* and the gift, with little ritual other than possibly the unspoken wish of goodwill for the future between siblings. Arguably the habitus of both British Evangelical Christians and

British Gujarati would mean a lack of cultural connectivity for an event that has no Western equivalent.

Of British Gujarati, nine believed there is a religious or Indian tradition background of *Rakshabandan*. A total of thirty of all sixty respondents combined religion and tradition. In the questionnaire, the terms 'religion' and 'tradition' were not defined, hence it is likely they were used interchangeably, as would be expected in the British Gujarati experience. Given that participants were speaking in English, the most frequently used term was 'religion.' The understanding of the religious background of *Rakshabandan* is very unclear and varies from person to person. Hence it appears that religious, traditional, cultural practices are intertwined and inseparable from family practices that continue to adapt.

4.7.3.3 Common Interpretations of *Rakshabandan*

Twenty of the thirty British Gujarati Christians and nine of the thirty British Gujarati understand the background to be the support and protection between brothers and sisters. Regardless of understanding the origins of *Rakshabandan*, there is a belief in the relevance of brother/sister bonds that exist beyond the practices within the broader British culture. Even though two thirds of the British Gujarati Christians had made the conscious effort to understand the background of *Rakshabandan*, they were not able to represent it within their Convert identity.

The principle of position and representation as discussed by Stuart Hall connects with *Rakshabandan* and British Gujarati Christian Converts. Hall argues that the power of cultural position to articulate cultural identity is within the influence of the British culture (1996:222). The cessation of the practise of *Rakshabandan* by the British Gujarati Converts is an act that connects to muted group theory.

While the observance of *Rakshabandan* is never directly addressed as an opposition to British Evangelical habitus, the Converts themselves do not consider the role of the brother as having the same relevance post-conversion. The position of power represented by the British Evangelical Christian doxa requires the social capital of British Gujarati Christian Converts as agents within the field in order to unmute themselves. In doing so they unmute the British Gujarati and their personal British Gujaratiness. As a strategy in the Bourdieu sense, there is an eventual change in the habitus.

As a tactic in the de Certeau sense, the chance of flexibility within the authoritative structure creates a blurry inclusive place instead of an exclusive, extraneous space. The

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identification of the British Gujarati Christian by the British Evangelical Church becomes the cultural identity the British Gujarati presume is permanently fixed and must be adhered to. The Converts accept British Gujarati family roles prior to the change in religious identity as less relevant post-conversion. This is due to their position in the British Evangelical Church context, so they fail to continue to represent *Rakshabandan* as a permissible cultural event shared with their family.

Interestingly, the effect of conversion has changed the practice of the British Gujarati Christian and the continued separation between the British Gujarati and the Converts. *Rakshabandan*'s particular relevance of nurturing, reinforcing and remembering a childhood bond that could be adapted in modes of diaspora is abandoned by over half of the Converts, perhaps through their own misinterpretation of their conversion identity. On the other hand, amongst the British Gujarati, almost one hundred per cent continue to observe the custom.

What is interesting is that the effect of conversion has not only changed the practice of the British Gujarati Christians but leads to continued separation between the British Gujarati and the Converts. The gap widens as other family gatherings are further neglected and thus continues to affect the future relationships between the children of British Gujarati and the children of the Converts. The breakdown of practices of *Rakshabandan*, post-conversion, appears to be symbolic violence that may sever British Gujarati family roles.

As a result of the differences between modes of diaspora and the constant movement of habitus and agency within social fields, a certain amount of disengagement from traditional family practices with the British Gujarati family of origin is perhaps unavoidable. The threads of cultural movements within family roles are influenced beyond the fixed nature of cultural family traditions. The idea of who has the agency to significantly influence habitus is dependent on the power to influence via position through the celebration of events. The withdrawal of participation in family cultural customs is more deliberate with Converts as they stated they had stopped participation due to conversion.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed instances of family role changes after conversion. My research through conversations, field notes and observations show that conversion from Hinduism to Christianity, defined by Lewis Rambo as 'tradition transition' (1995:14) has

had some negative impact on family roles amongst all of the Converts that I encountered.[44]

By beginning with the impact on the family of the individual conversion of Raksha and moving to Rani Darshan's conversion and subsequent impact on multiple generations I have shown the broad range of issues that are part of navigating family roles. Where issues that are perhaps less common such as mediation of the roles of elders or the disabled, the individual converts have made stronger connections with the British Evangelical Church as a support system that has resulted in the individual converts being able to use their agency to effectively determine and increase their social capitals. The complication of the process creates cultural fractures.

The relational interactions at family gatherings follow a natural progression into shared family religious rituals in weddings, births, deaths or other significant customs. These acted as public symbols of the family's social capital in the community. Discontinuing religious habits and attending church services replaced time spent in weekly family gatherings for religio-cultural celebrations such as Diwali, betrothals, weddings and birth celebrations.

Beyond the Hindu practices, the relevance of conduct over belief bears relation to Bourdieu's concept of the connection between habitus in a social field being flexed through the informal rules of doxa by which goodwill in terms of social capital becomes salient to agency (Bourdieu 1977:88). The conversion itself is less of a point of contention within the family networks, as long as family roles and spiritual autonomy are not limited to binary belonging.

Acknowledging cultural changes and thus ideological shifts in the diaspora as inevitable, Stephane Dufoix refers to 'modes' of diaspora as manners or tendencies of diaspora (2008:xv). As cultural practices are relevant in specific social fields within the host country, they are not simultaneously practised amongst all the British Gujarati. This creates friction between two of the modes as stated by Dufoix. The second 'enclaved' mode, where the British Gujarati have a close connection to the host land through education, language and generational assimilation, is challenged by the fourth 'antagonistic' mode. Some members of the British Gujarati in the fourth mode have adapted to connect more significantly with the host country culture rather than the origin

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[44] Based on the Joshua Project statistics three hundred Converts identified in England, I have interacted with a minimum of two hundred. Most interactions have been in person. A small minority have been through online live gatherings, social media and telephone conversations.

country. Therefore, there is friction within the British Gujarati family between those raised within the host culture and those who arrived as the 1st or 1.5 generations.

Some of the converts attempt to create their own forms of family relationships through generating forms of symbolic capital depending on their overlapping positions in all their relevant social fields. This is evident in the close relationships that Rina and her mother Urvashi maintain with the British Evangelical Church. They use the strengths and weaknesses of their agencies in multiple religio-cultural fields to push the boundaries of practice, thus forcing them to stretch.

Stuart Hall refers to the creation and manipulation of cultural identities of diaspora as through those who possess the power to position themselves to articulate from their perspective (Hall 1996:223). The Converts use what Hall refers to as aporia, the constant state of flux to their advantage, by manoeuvring their position and representation through their understanding of varying levels of agency. In this respect, the mode, manner or context of diaspora through conversion along with the constant micro adjustments through deconstructing and reconstructing habitus are manipulated between their pre- and post-convert agencies.

Within the British Gujarati and the Convert's contexts, the titles or labels as nominal identities are fixed, but the virtual actions they represent are not. The functions of family roles are constantly negotiated in the British Gujarati and Converts' modes of diaspora. Conversion accentuates the changes in family roles and thereby relationships within and without natal family. Within the fixed titles of family in both the British Evangelical Church and the Convert's contexts, relational capital changes the function and meanings of family roles through changes in habitus.

Reviewing all of the instances of negotiating family roles, the readjustment of how, where and why the Converts interact in their family and community after conversion is the most important factor. Essentially, family roles can be flexible for the British Gujarati, if they are able to make the right connections through their existing relationship networks within the family. This is done through relational interaction as is evident with Mohan and his parents' ability to act intermediaries. This is part of the way they create family networks through creating new patterns of relationships.

It is not so much that British Gujarati Christians' need to rely on the British Evangelical Church; it is more the idea that the broad network of Evangelical Christians would be available as an extended family safety-net thus encouraging network expansion. British Gujarati Christians' conversion is an ideological shift that changed the lifestyle of

the British Gujarati family in terms of roles and relationships. As symbols of tradition transition the following chapter will address the change in locational belonging.

Chapter 5: Changing Locational Belonging

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on family relationship identities and roles due to the choice of change in religious self-identity. The changes in expectation of the British Gujarati family and Christian family are often confused by everyday actions that cannot always be clearly articulated. The impact of a conversion within the family is measured by conduct that is visible in the broader community. By the individual's choice to relocate to an alternate place of worship there is a visible and public acknowledgement of a Convert's change in self-identity and identification by others.

This chapter explores the location of British Gujarati (BG) and the British Evangelical Church's religio-cultural practices as extensions of family and religious social fields, and the expectations of those who function within them. I begin with an overview of the key theories that will be applied to the Convert's experiences of deciding to attend church as a result of choosing to convert. This will be followed by a section that examines the dismantling of the Convert's connections to the *mandir* from which she or he is expected to make an immediate exit in order belong to the British Evangelical Church. The chapter also investigates how those already within the Church experience adjustment of the habitus due to the arrival of the Convert. The next section will examine the role of the London Church as an alternative form of British Evangelical Church for the Converts and their family and community.

After addressing the shift in the public place of worship, the following section will look at the Convert's change of relationship to the family and other relative's homes as the former location of religio-cultural practice. The fourth section will deal with how *Rakshabandan* as an event built into religio-cultural structure of the family home as preparation for their daughters' forthcoming relocation to patrilocal homes, is altered in the conversion context. The chapter concludes by drawing together the different aspects of locational belonging as experienced by Converts.

5.2 Theoretical Applications of Locational Belonging

As a result of conversion, there is a re-evaluation of the previously held characterisation of foreign values, different beliefs and alternate assumptions about worldviews as conversion alters personal religio-cultural ideology (Hiebert 2008). Along with this

dispersal of religious beliefs, there follows a change in location of religio-cultural practice.

Locational shifts from one place to another have a correlation to diaspora theory. Using Stephané DuFoix's 'modes of diaspora' (2008:xv) we can separate locational and ideological diaspora. The centroperipheral mode has the strongest connection with the place of origin. In the enclaved mode, there is engagement with the place of origin but without the direct connection that is evident in the centroperipheral mode. In the atopic mode, the origin is acknowledged but considered less important. Finally, in the antagonistic mode, influencing the place of origin becomes the strongest focus. Each mode has loosely connected features that provide something of an equivalent to the dispersal of religious beliefs.

While addressing some adjustment of cultural practices in different locations, traditional definitions of diaspora are somewhat limited to generalised religious identity and practice (Cohen 2008). The alternative approach to diaspora based on Dufoix's modes, relies less on linear concepts of people's movement from traditional theorists. Modifiers such as 'victim' or 'labour' are fixed by long term categorisation. Dufoix's concepts of modes assist in analysing the broad variety of experiences of the journey from British Gujarati to British Gujarati Christian locations that will be discussed later in the chapter.

I use Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus as: "A structuring structure which organises practices and perception of practices" (Bourdieu 1984:170). As such, habitus is a pattern of thoughts and practices that are invisible to the practitioner. The 'structuring structures' under discussion in this chapter are the *mandir* or the church. The central focuses of religio-cultural practices, where self-identity and identification by others is enacted. The structure in question is the construct of the church and the *mandir* as exclusive places of belonging. The areas of interaction are defined by Bourdieu as social fields which have boundaries, specific rules, and knowledge, certain aspects which may become self-evident truths or 'doxa' (Bourdieu 1990:164).

The British Gujarati Christian's movement of religious practice from one site to another is diasporic in nature in that there is more than a transition from one building to another. The doxa, capital and habitus within the church are foreign compared to those within the *mandir*. For de Certeau, social fields as locations are either a 'space' that is merely occupied geographically, or a 'place' for those who understand and uphold the overarching authority structure known as 'strategy.' He explains:

> To walk is to lack a proper place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place. (De Certeau 1984:103)

De Certeau's idea of absence as 'lacking a place' is the process of wandering. Walking from one place to another is also described by de Certeau as "the pedestrian speech act" (de Certeau 1984:99). For the 1st generation Convert, like the 1st generation migrant, there is strong connection to past experience that is not shared by those without the same historical belonging. It is the physical articulation of the new claim of self-identity as Christian that then changes the religio-cultural identity. In order to belong to the institution, individuals must find techniques or 'tactics' to gain access to the system (de Certeau 1984:xvi). Moreover, it is the re-placement out of the *mandir* and in to the church, thus distinct movement from one place and all it represents to another place.

Combining Bourdieu and de Certeau forms a base from which to explore the movement to British Evangelical Christian locations. To transition from the 'space' into the 'place' requires understanding overarching authority strategies and using 'tactics' as a way into a 'place' (de Certeau 1988:117). Hence, Bourdieu's 'strategy' for entering and belonging in a social field bears similarity to de Certeau's use of 'tactics' to transition from merely occupying a space to belonging in a place. It is the area in between 'space' and 'place' that muted group theory is applicable in terms of Bourdieu's strategy and de Certeau's tactics.

Muted group theory poses the issue of the dominant and subordinated within the social field. Interacting in the group by what Bourdieu calls the 'rules of the game' for the British Gujarati Christian Converts overwhelms their sense of agency. The two social fields in question have differing rules in order for the agents to interact. Techniques (otherwise referred by de Certeau and Bourdieu as 'tactics' or 'strategy') must be employed by the convert. Smith-Barkman references 'subtle overlapping power issues' in church and mission contexts (2018:3). The British Gujarati Christian convert, locational belonging is successfully appropriated by the pedestrian speech act. In other words, where the Convert chooses to go is empowered by their self-identity, contributing to their identification and thus their sense of belonging. During the interim of dislocation there exists a time of uncertainty of letting go of identification from those in one location and thus losing a sense of agency before understanding the rules of personal agency amongst others in the new location.

The British Gujarati Christian is on a journey of rearranging their locational belonging as a way to 'unmute' their new converted self-identity. Bourdieu's 'rules of the game' as the guidelines for belonging in a social field and de Certeau's idea of 'the pedestrian speech act' contribute to understanding the change of belonging in a place.

Muted group theory refers to a locational unmuting that occurs over time. The physical movement aligns with Paul Gilroy's metaphorical construction of identities created en route as relocating does not erase the impact of previous locational belonging. Gilroy focuses on the construction of culture that moves away from the idea of being rooted in a historic national identity or history. Instead, the routes of people movements create ever shifting versions of cultures that negotiate the binary of the dominant and the subordinate based on habitus, capitals and agency.

Like Dufoix, Gilroy sees the movement rather than the defined locations as the range wherein belonging is processed. His use of the ship as the metaphor for belonging inside a boundary, allows those within to create a framework for authority or doxa. Using agency, those in the specific defined confined location establish and negotiate capitals through network relationships with other agents (Gilroy 1993:4).

The next section will examine the challenges of locational belonging in relation to the physical and religio-cultural movement from one place of worship to another.

5.3 Community *Mandir* to British Evangelical Church Locational Belonging

Through conversion, the Converts choose a place of worship in order to align with a new aspect of their self-identity. The process of choosing to go into a church is one of the primary factors of identification by others in British Evangelical social fields. The experience differs depending on circumstances particular to the conversion experience. Prior to Sunita's conversion to Christianity, as a first generation migrant, an abandoned pregnant wife with three small children, and unable to speak English with little cultural, social or economic capital, she reflects on her need for locational belonging at the *mandir:*

> I didn't want people to stop speaking to me or perhaps not coming to visit me or stop speaking to me. So how could you live if people don't speak to you, then what do you believe? It wasn't for thinking of what God would think, but what people will think. That's what was inside me, to do what people want. I would go to the '*mandir*' so people could see I was a good person. (Sunita/inv/1)

Sunita Darji's presence in the local *mandir* contributed to what she believed was required of a 'good person'. It appears that prior to her conversion, the sense of locational

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meaning of the *mandir* had become a hostile 'space' for her where her identity was muted because of her status as an abandoned wife. Due to her lack of capital, the *mandir* had become a 'space' occupied by symbols of religious practice rather than as a 'place' of belonging. Similar changes in the relevance of the *mandir* were noted in Rani Darshan's and Sunita's conversion experiences. Their habitus of attending gave an appearance of devotion that symbolised presence in the right 'space.' In this sense the idea of 'walking in the city' stated by de Certeau (1984) does not refer only to the individual who is walking and thus seeking a place, but also those who see and become familiar with the visibility of the habitus of others.

Sunita believed her visits to the *mandir* would be identified positively by others in the hope of creating relationships that might bring her access to networks. It is important to note that the gatherings at the *mandir* are not for pastoral care or instruction. Relational care and instruction occur through domestic worship and shared festival celebrations.[1] Within the *mandir* being seen is a contribution to the increase of symbolic capital.

Whether inside her own home or in the public *mandir*, her fear that the British Gujarati community might 'stop speaking' to her suggests the limitations of Sunita's agency. Her continued concern suggests the importance of the relational aspect of identification by others as her only way to increase her capital. Without the significant benefits of other forms of capital, British Gujarati symbolic capital appeared to be Sunita's sole access to the network of relationships that might give her family any hopes of survival or social mobility. This is evident in her concern for who her children might marry. The purpose of *mandir* attendance in Britain is addressed by Kim Knott (1986) as a way of connecting and affirming relationships with British Gujarati.

For Sunita, the local *mandir* became connected with feelings of rejection and isolation. Upon attending the churches, Suniat found a way to link with indigenous British people, thus challenging the idea the British Gujarati were her only source of community and dismissing the characterisation of the British as unapproachable due to her poor English language skills. The churches she walked past near her home were insignificant before her conversion. Her sense of bewilderment at the existence of Christianity contributes locational belonging of Christians is invisible to those whose social fields have no overlap with other religious institutions. After conversion, each church symbolised a possible place of belonging where the dominant group held an alternate

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[1] The beginning of Chapter 1 illustrates the significance of family gatherings at festival times.

access to doxa. Her sudden awareness of the church and Christianity is evident in the following excerpt:

> I didn't know who Jesus was or the god that the white people believe in. I didn't know who all these church buildings belonged to. I was totally unaware. Where we live in India, I only saw Hindu and Muslim. In England I came and for ten years I didn't know that there might be a Christian. She [Punjabi friend] said, "The white people have a god." She said, "Jesus." I said, "I never heard that name. What is a Jesus?" So, we prayed. When I felt better the next day, I just stopped doing the *puja*. The *mandir* and the *murti* were still in the house, but about five or six years later when we were painting and decorating, I threw them in the bin. (Sunita/inv/2) [2]

Sunita realised that the long-established church buildings and the 'god' of the 'white people' were part of the established indigenous British social field and thus connected to agents in the church. The agency of those in British social fields and the church proved more visible, larger and far more influential than the agents within the *mandir*. Not only did Sunita lack economic capital, she lacked other forms of capital that Bourdieu refers to as social, cultural and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu 1990:135). These include an understanding of the language, cultural norms and appropriate social skills to relate with other agents in the field. The church building represented alternate symbolic capitals than those available at the *mandir* due to the larger number of churches and the kindness and welcome she received from those within.

The idealizing of the 'white god' through the ceremonial representations of icons in the church was a sharp contrast to the *murti*[3] within the *mandir*. The god of the 'white people' as the owner of the many church buildings seems especially salient for a vulnerable woman who was questioning her locational belonging. She considered that the church buildings belonged to someone, offering hope of finding a place that was not controlled by the British Gujarati. She had access to a social field where her British Gujarati symbolic capitals perhaps held less agency, but a greater potential for increase.

Sunita was aware of her difference in appearance and language from the 'white people' and the symbols of their god in the church through the Bible and Anglican church artefacts. It is also possible that Sunita fits a stereotype of a definition of the second phase of diaspora as stated by William Safran, quoted by Robin Cohen: "[D]iaspora was deployed as 'a metaphoric designation' for expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien

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[2] 2020-06-18 Information gathered by telephone conversation to ask when Sunita started going to church. She told me it was about two weeks later.

[3] *Murti* is the Gujarati word for the icons in the *mandir*.

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residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court"* (Cohen 2008:1). The metaphorical designation is a broad characterisation of the migrant. Sunita's presence was occupying a 'space' in the church building, as she did not have the appropriate language or understand the customs well enough to interact fully. She recollects her earliest visits to the church:

> My friend took me to the church, but nothing was going on in my head. I didn't know anything. I was just bored. I understood nothing. Then I noticed everyone talking to me nicely. There was no '*maru taru*'.[4] [literal meaning is 'mine yours' referring to mean spirited gossip and selfish behaviour] They weren't looking at me and saying, "Then this happened and that happened." I took baptism in 2003, even after that I still went to the *mandir*. (Sunita/inv/2)

Sunita compared her experiences and expectations of the *mandir* to those in the church. The necessity of relational networks with those with capital was significant in both locations. This is evident by her comment on those in the *mandir* displaying what she believed to be mean spirited behaviour compared to those in the church who 'talked to her nicely.' Sunita's self-esteem was sufficient to increase her own sense of symbolic capital. Despite her inability to speak English her self-identity was unmuted by how she believed she was identified by the dominant group in the church.

Her perception of the people in the *mandir* changed from those whose protection and support she tried to gain, to inconsequential and ignorant of the world outside of their social field. She explains, "because the *mandir* people are *gamra*."[5] This is a degrading categorisation that she employed to claim group membership in the church. Tajfel and Turner's idea of loyalty through group belonging regardless of level of first-hand experience is demonstrated (1972). She was able to dislocate herself from the *mandir*. In comparison to the church, she now perceived the *mandir* to be a location or 'space' steeped in ignorance by describing the mandir as "*ek dam nakammu*," which means completely without purpose and the actions within as lacking *arth* or value.

Even though Sunita was an outsider in the church due to her language, ethnic and religio-cultural limitations, her symbolic interaction within a distinct British cultural location increased her sense of social capital. Despite the lack of language, she was convinced there was no manipulative gossip in the church. Furthermore, she was able to extract herself from the people at the *mandir* and, therefore, take a certain pride in

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[4] Referring to manipulative gossip.

[5] *Gamra* means to have a rural village mentality.

distancing herself from the location and all it represented. The church became a further draw toward British Evangelical religio-cultural locations and practices. Bhatewara and Bradley (2013) note that conversion also brings an increase in self-worth and aspiration.

At the point of her conversion experience, Sunita was in what Dufoix defines as the centroperipheral mode of geographical diaspora (2008:xv). Her dependence on the cultural connections with people around her from her country of origin was very high. However, the centroperipheral mode may be similarly applied to the manner of her religious identity. Her comments are characterised by the need for connection to the British Gujarati community. The ties to the familiar location, in the geographical and ideological displacement, are stronger than the ties in the new location. This is evident by her need to stay connected with her country or religious location of origin, even if only for the sake of securing appropriate wives for her sons.

Sunita kept the home *mandir* and *murti* and did not expect or forbid her children to perform their daily rituals of *Surya puja*.[6] This decision would have been very difficult if Sunita understood the doxa of the British Evangelical Church in creating physical space between Hindu 'idols' and the Christian identity. Likewise, she continued to go to the *mandir* while she was going to church as she could not completely assimilate to the church, nor disconnect entirely from the public *mandir*. Her religious dependence on the *mandir* had been replaced, however, her cultural connections could not be completely detached. Through conversion Sunita increased the psychological distance from her identity as an abused, abandoned woman and took responsibility for her future.

In a sense, Sunita's change in religious identity may be defined using the traditional diaspora terms that add qualifying adjectives categorising her as a 'victim.'[7] Robin Cohen in his nine frequent features of diaspora references trauma and deterritorialization from the homeland as a reason for geographical diaspora. Sunita's state of homelessness and abandonment had a strong connection to the people in the *mandir* location. Her benefit cheques and housing allowance were given to an extended family member who returned to them to the sender (Sunita/inv/1).

Her symbolic capital amongst the British Gujarati had been depleted by the decision of her husband to abandon her. As a victim, she found refuge in an alternate religious location, but still needed the connection to her British Gujarati religio-cultural identity

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[6] *Surya puja* refers to the morning ritual of worshipping the sun by offering water and repeating a chant after bathing.

[7] Victim diaspora refers to those who have left their place of origin due to trauma and persecution (Cohen 2010).

for the sake of her children. She recalled her dilemma: "When I was in church, I was worried. Who would marry my children?" (Sunita/inv/1) The symbolic capital in the public *mandir* and the church were based upon agency, however how agency was used differed in both locations.

Sunita had strong geographic and religio-cultural connections to her religious self-identity of origin. The process of conversion of her religious identity was put into motion when she walked into the church, thus crossing a boundary of defined locational belonging. Her concern was less for her own symbolic capital of locational belonging, but the potential of access to capitals for her children. The increase in her self-esteem as she made connections with the people in the church added a new network that had potential benefit for her children. She chose to create some physical distance from the location of the *mandir* as the only place she could find support. This reveals her ability to use the space as a social product with a social construction. She maintained a peripheral place as something she could hold on to for the sake of her children's locational belonging.

Bourdieu defines social fields as areas of interaction, which have boundaries, specific rules and knowledge, certain aspects of which may become self-evident truths or 'doxa' (Bourdieu 1990:164). Each person within the social field is an agent that may be influenced and has influence. Sunita understood that the doxa within the church was not the same as British Gujarati doxa. The authority structure of the public *mandir* was perceived as hostile as she became aware that her agency was insufficient to make the appropriate connections with other agents in the British Gujarati social fields. The public *mandir* provided the largest area of overlap of relationships. As the daily *puja* is performed in the home, the public *mandir* serves as the main source of British Gujarati cultural connection for first generation migrants. The purpose of the public *mandir* in diaspora is to encourage British Gujarati to meet together to maintain the connection with culture and tradition in the British religious landscape (Knott 1986:98).

The church Sunita Darji attended was not frequented by others who spoke the Gujarati language or understood the South Asian cultural capitals. Furthermore, Sunita's lack of understanding of the English language and British culture held insufficient agency to build a network that would provide her with the support for her family. The disconnect from the public *mandir*, as a person shamed by the British Gujarati for a failed marriage, did not carry the same weight in the church. On the contrary, it appears her perception of the church and her personal sense of belonging within, satisfied her need for agency and

negotiation of symbolic capitals as part of the church habitus is in taking care of those in need.

Sunita's interpretation of symbolic capital of a location differs from the way those already within the church may interpret the presence of British Gujarati in their midst. Sunita needed a place where she did not feel the judgement of her divorce. Part of the British Evangelical Church habitus is an openness to those in need of support due to various difficult life situations. Potential converts' feelings of vulnerability are thus considered part of the British Evangelical Christian doxa. The value of symbolic capitals is inadvertently reiterated by the pattern of those who attended regularly. Sunita's presence was thus not perceived by her as having a negative impact upon the British Evangelical Christian collective symbolic capitals.

De Certeau argues that a person walking changes the environment by their very presence (de Certeau 1984:98). While this theory is used for urban spaces, it can also be applied to changes in society. Hilga Wild referencing de Certeau states, "Certeau posited the possibility for everyone to explore the interstitial spaces and to create new paths" (2012:5). From a British cultural perspective, the visibility of South Asians in various public places seems obvious. However, the perceived rigidity of British Gujarati religious belonging is complicated by monolithic characterisation that confines the discourse of religio-cultural belonging in diaspora. The ambiguity of locational belonging is therefore a process not simply for the British Gujarati Christians, but also for those who have long established experiences of particular frameworks.

Bourdieu refers to changes in the social field as 'strategies,' that allow for sometimes slight incremental changes to habitus. De Certeau uses the term 'tactics' as a way for those lacking sufficient influence, to gain access to the authoritative framework (de Certeau 1984:xiv, xix). Both of these terms applied to the British Gujarati Christian's movement suggest planned and thought-out actions. Arguably in the case of the interaction between British Evangelical Christians and Converts, the changes in habitus may be quite subtle. Over time, the changes become more substantive in negotiating locational belonging. In this sense, the conversion while significant to the individual, becomes more identifiable to British Evangelical Christians and British Gujarati through the Convert's new routine of practice.

Rani Darshan, as the first Convert in her multigeneration patrilocal family in Kenya, experienced a locational shift as she became involved in the church. The context of her British Gujarati Christian life began while living in Kenya. Her experiences reveal deeply

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rooted doxa connected to ethnicity. After conversion, Rani attended a local church led by missionaries. While a Hindu, she considered herself very devout through religio-cultural practices and sought to transfer them to the church. Rani believed her presence in the patrilocal home was controlled by her in-laws. Through her relocation of practices from the *mandirs* (home and public) she was able to unmute her self-identity.

Rani's new practices in the dramatically different location of a church validated her dislocation of practices from *mandirs*. However, her desire to serve within the location of the church was directed outward to the indigenous Kenyans by the church leaders. Her ethnic and economic capital had a level of symbolic value in the church, in that she was a Convert from Hinduism. This caused a decrease in her symbolic capital at home. Like Minakshi Shah's uncle who referred to the house as polluted, as a Brahmin, Rani's family's issues of purity and pollution dictated her ability to enter locations that would pollute the patrilocal households.

Rani was challenged by dominant groups on various levels in her social fields. Meares (et al 2005:13) breaks down muted groups by three identified sub-groups. In the patrilocal home prior to her conversion, Rani was 'resigned' and disengaged as there seemed little hope of change. At her point of conversion, she became angrily 'disengaged' from her patrilocal home and the dominant group within. Post-conversion she increased her religious capital within the church and at the same time changed her locational belonging by her efforts to 'help those less fortunate' (RaniD/inv/2). At this point she became 'muted but engaged', in that the dominant group in the church decided where it was appropriate for her to express her religious devotion in terms of acts of service. She was directed by the church to a part of town that was known to be home to what she describes as 'the very poorest Kenyans' (RaniD/inv/2).

The use of symbolic capital and agency in location is demonstrated to work in a variety of directions, yet influenced by the doxa and habitus already within the church. This is further complicated by gendered aspect of habitus associated with service in church. While the changes are dramatic in terms of relocation for Sunita Darji and Rani Darshan, for the British Evangelical Church located in British Gujarati areas, there is also an influence from the Converts upon the church location. This will be discussed in the following section.

5.4 The London Church and Locational Belonging

The previous section revealed some of the difficulties for Converts to moving to the church as a place of religio-cultural belonging. The London Church was created for the Converts living within the British Gujarati community. It is described as a 'group' that has weekly gatherings referred to as a '*sangat*'.[8] The emphasis is upon a less traditional British Evangelical format than is understood by the term 'church'. The London Church website encourages the option for locational belonging, rather than addressing Evangelical Christian conversion. Multi-locational belonging in terms of the church or *mandir* is never addressed directly. The leaders of the London Church encourage personal negotiation of a place to belong regardless of religious identity. This is achieved by the use of Gujarati language along with English as well as the serving of food and general involvement amongst the British Gujarati community with youth groups and mother and toddler groups.[9]

The London Church establishes a combination of Christianity from British and American Evangelical representation within a created context with and for the British Gujarati Christian and British Gujarati social fields. The origins lead back to weekly gatherings in a British Gujarati Christian home. Bible readings, prayers and singing were conducted in Gujarati, Hindi and English. Along with the British Gujarati Christian host, two American missionaries also led the instructional part of the meetings. The gatherings eventually moved to a Gospel Hall. The American missionaries filled the roles of coordinating leadership and administration by attempting a contextual approach for the weekly public gathering.

Along with sharing South Asian food after the service, there is a specific choice of artefacts. The scarcity of any form of religious icon in the British Evangelical Church is not uncommon, however unlike many church locations, there is no plain crucifix. This implies a circumvention of any erroneous indications of forms of idolatry in the British Gujarati Christian contextual setting. There is a small cloth on the podium that bears an image of the cross and a traditionally dressed South Asian woman holding a *divo*.[10] The cross, clearly a Christian symbol is in the background, while in the forefront is the traditionally dressed woman holding a modern artistic image of a *divo*; more *diva*

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[8] Worship gathering.

[9] In order to maintain anonymity of participants, exact details of this group are not published in this thesis.

[10] See Appendix H.

surround the cross and the woman.[11] The *divo* as an artefact used in *puja* is the light that connects to the symbol of Jesus as the light of the world in the New Testament.[12]

This Bible verse is quoted in English and Gujarati at the beginning of each gathering. In the British Gujarati context, the *divo* may be used daily for rituals and is especially significant in the celebration of Diwali as the victory of light over darkness. The aesthetics of the London Church are clearly important to the missionaries and the Converts in creating a suitable location that goes beyond the idea of Christianity being characterised by British culture.

As a British Gujarati Christian, I noted the use of second-hand *saris* for decoration at the London Church in contrast to the *saris* used in the *mandir* to dress the *murti*. During my early visits, the draping *saris* in a place of worship appeared out of place. In my attempt to make sense of the scene before me, I was trying to avoid defining the *saris* as clothing. My interpretation of walking into a church building or any building and seeing old used clothing repurposed for decorative purposes seemed contrary to my British, British Gujarati and British Evangelical cultural expectations, especially in terms of identifying a place of worship. I envisaged a scene where I could hang Western apparel as a contextualised approach in an Indian church to attract secular Westerners. The mixture of visual cultural symbols and my interaction with them were momentarily confusing. At this point one of the female missionaries made a comment:

> You know we [the missionaries/leaders] just think it's really important that they [British Gujarati] feel welcome… that they see things that are familiar. We can buy beautiful *saris* that have been donated to the charity shop. When visitors come from the US, they can't believe how beautiful it is. (FN/BGLC1)

The relevance of cultural awareness was balanced with the perception of the cultural artefacts as appreciated by the Americans, and thus accepted by the British Gujarati Christians as relevant to the location. As I developed relationships in the community, I asked Rina, a young adult, second generation migrant and the first Convert in her family, for her opinion on the décor. She responded, "Yeah it's kind of like for the American missionaries, cos we're so Indiaaaan Yaar!" (FN/BGLC1). Her use of the first phrase to mock the American exotic view of the sari was followed by an exaggeration of mockery

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[11] Plural of *divo.*

[12] When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." The Gospel of John Chapter 8:12 The Holy Bible New International Version.

of English spoken by the 1st generation British Gujarati diaspora. Rina's description of the location while partially in jest, revealed her own ability to simultaneously interpret the artefacts and navigate the networks presented, while my own reaction to the London Church was more fixed based on my expectations of the inside of a church.

While the artistic presentation was appealing to my Western cultural view, from my British Gujarati Christian perspective there are certain values that appear contradictory. For many British Gujarati, especially the economically disadvantaged, used clothing is shared amongst very close family and would be private and intimate through a level of agency specific to the family social field as relating to the idea of purity and pollution.[13] Secondly, items given to a place of worship should be brand new and not items that were discarded and thus no longer valuable. Finally, neither the British Evangelical Church, the *mandir*, nor the British Gujarati home would appropriate clothing for décor.

The appropriation of a simple British Gujarati garment alludes to a gap in the awareness of cultural understanding of the meaning of the *sari* in the diaspora. 1st generation migrant women wear *saris* on a daily basis (Åsa Hole 2005). It signals a generational cultural understanding amongst the other generations of British Gujarati. The translation of the use of the garment and its intrinsic value to the British Gujarati diaspora is reimagined by those whose agency is woven into the British Evangelical Church's authority structure. However, the imagery of the *sari* can be drawn upon as a tactic to visually attract the British Gujarati for purposes that suit the position and representation that fits the social field. In this sense Rina's attitude shows her ability to be flexible with her agency and the social fields represented.

The idea of agency in creating imagery and the hope of evoking a particular type of habitus through visual familiarity within a location increases symbolic capital and influences traditional British Evangelical Church doxa. South Asian artefacts are repurposed to create a path between the new British Evangelical Church 'place' and the British Gujarati public *mandir* 'place' as relevant locations to transfer celebration of rituals. Rina sensed irony behind the good intentions. Upon my return to the location on future visits, I noticed a gradual, continued adaptation of the artefacts by and for Rina's generation.

The representation of the London Church appears to be creating a history that takes into consideration the difficulties of family roles and practices as discussed in the previous chapter. While the older generation like Raksha Gupta and Rani Darshan could see the

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[13] See Chapter 4 illustration of the movement from pollution to purity adapted from Åsa Hole (2005:122).

benefits, the London Church ideals may have already become less relevant to a 2nd generation British Gujarati of the millennial generation. That is not to say there is no value in the attempts at placement of contextual visual artefacts, but that the process of locational belonging continually adjusts contextually between generations.

Contextual adjustment in the in-between spaces is part of Paul Gilroy's focus on what occurs during the diasporic journey as beyond the binary of location from country of origin to country of destination. The metaphoric ship and the ocean served as locations where a sub-cultural habitus was necessary within the in-between spaces of the journey from one location to another. Firstly, capital and agency on the ship are created in and subject to the movement of the ocean, so beyond complete control of the occupants. Secondly, the ability of those navigating the ship have some control over how they manipulate the ship according to nature's elements. Thirdly, the passengers adjust their own 'spaces' into 'places.' De Certeau posits the ordinary man as the narrator of personal adjustments to belonging, "when it is he who defines the (common) place of discourse and the (anonymous) space of its development" (de Certeau 1984:5).

Similarly, just as Gilroy's ship is in between continents, the London Church serves as the vessel in the gulf between British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian locations wherein the sub-cultures are created. The capitals and agents are subject to the vast ocean-like British, British Evangelical Church and British Gujarati cultures in which the London Church is immersed. Secondly, like the navigators of Gilroy's ships, the leaders have the agency to manoeuvre the overarching structure of the London Church according to their adaptation of the artefacts of the *divo* and the image of the cross. Thirdly, like the passengers of the ship, the Converts adjust their own habitus to make the 'space' into their 'place.'

Through their use of their symbolic British Gujarati and British Evangelical capitals, Converts can create a 'place' that has some familiarities of a *mandir* and some familiarities of a church but is subject to the cultural changes of the British Gujarati, British Evangelical and broader British culture. Again, as Gilroy's ship was on a journey moving toward a destination, the London Church draws closer to the British Evangelical Christian normative culture. The following is an example of how Priti Bhakt uses a flexible approach to incorporate a mixed and somewhat blurred expression of a religio-cultural event at the London Church.

Priti is a relatively new British Gujarati Christian whose conversion story is as a direct result of the London Church. She had a difficult second pregnancy during which

time her friends at the London Church wanted to plan a special prayer gathering. Around the same time, Priti's family were looking for a location to hold an adapted Gujarati ceremony called *Ghodha Bharna*.[14] Traditionally, it involves giving the pregnant woman new clothes and gifts of sweets and fruits.[15] The London Church location was suggested to Priti. After some discussion it was then decided to combine the *Ghoda Bharna*, prayer gathering and a Baby Shower in order to include those that attended the London Church.[16] The *Ghoda Bharna* is not based on Sanskrit temple Hinduism, but is an essential ritual in domestic Hinduism, and is usually performed in the patrilocal home. The ritual connects to the householder stage of the *ashrama* where having children is an important achievement.[17]

The location served to help create religio-cultural overlaps and unexpectedly alter the habitus of British Gujarati, British Gujarati Christian and so British Evangelical Christian religio-cultural practice. The food and decorations were provided by Priti's female relatives and one or two British Gujarati Christian ladies helped with the set up in the Gospel Hall. They were able to help provide vegetarian food, especially an abundance of fruit and nuts,[18] which are common gifts for the pregnant woman.

One of the American missionaries light heartedly commented, "Only at London Church could you see a plate of chilli peppers next to cheese sandwiches at a baby shower" (FN/BS). This reminded me of my own initial reaction at seeing the draping *saris* used for decorations at the location. Both the American missionary and I were initially struck by our reactions to the different visual elements as representative of our individual perceptions of what a church or a baby shower should be. However, like the occupants on Gilroy's metaphorical ship, we became accustomed to the cultural motion of the moment.

The chilli peppers in church reveal the Converts' oddity in habitus of what might be considered normal, firstly, in a church, and secondly, at a baby shower. It could be argued that despite the strengths of the indigenous British culture and influence of the

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[14] *Ghoda Bharna* literal translation is lap filling, marked by filling the lap of the mother to be with things for her health and personal well-being and having a baby or a toddler play on her lap.

[15] See section British Gujarati Habitus in Chapter 1.

[16] The 'Baby Shower' is located in the 'Baby Boomer' generation in North American culture but more recently has been adopted in British culture.

[17] The householder stage is second of the four stages of life referred to *ashrama.*

[18] Fruit, nuts, honey, milk and yogurt are the most common forms of foods placed before the icons in the *mandir* and later shared as *prasad*. The foods hold symbolic connection to the temple and domestic worship.

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American missionaries, seemingly trivial actions made room for the local Gujaratiness within the location. The Gospel Hall is surrounded by a majority British Gujarati population. In a sense, the role of a British Christian location of the Gospel Hall becomes like Gilroy's ship. It is the place where changes in habitus create new versions of symbolic capitals that are useful for this particular phase of the Convert's life. Their self-identity and identification by the British Gujarati of what it means to be a Convert was challenged by the flexibility of locational belonging during Priti's event. The event confronted British Gujarati negative characterisation of conversion to Christianity as necessarily resulting in abandonment of British Gujarati tradition.

The British Gujarati have transferred their habitus, particularly in terms of food and dress into the wider community, and through this specific occasion, into the church. The symbolic capitals of the missionaries and the Converts in terms of language and religious identity within the building remained. Simultaneously, all capitals converged in the unanticipated creation of some new element of doxa by engaging with their respective boundaries of belonging. The British Gujarati friends and relatives of Priti seemed very comfortable to make the Gospel Hall their place for praying and including Christian prayers for the baby.

At some point there was an obvious discomfort amongst the regular attendees of the London Church. They shared their concerns amongst themselves that their Christian place being used for British Gujarati religio-cultural practices questioned their idea of an exclusive boundary marker of the location (FN/BS). They argued that the British Gujarati came in and disrupted the converts' sense of purpose of the London Church. Whilst the culture of baby showers is secular, within the location of the Gospel Hall, the agents of the London Church felt their Evangelical Christian religio-cultural capitals were challenged and the boundaries of doxa were in danger of being violated by the British Gujarati habitus.

The event conjoins Bourdieu and de Certeau's theories of belonging, authority and adjustment of boundaries. In this particular instance, muted group theory is applicable to evaluate the areas of overlap or contention. Smith-Barkman referencing issues in church and mission contexts notes three points of dominance, acceptance and subordination in assessing control. Firstly, those who were part of the London Church held the 'dominance' as it was their 'place' where their location was used in the manners they validated. Secondly, the difficulty was in how they negotiated 'acceptance'. Smith-Barkman notes, the less the acceptance the less the respect (2018). There must therefore

be a balance within the social field in how much the habitus can be altered by any level of agency. The challenge was in maintaining the doxa of the church yet simultaneously avoiding damaging symbolic capital of relationships with the local British Gujarati. Thirdly, the point of 'subordination' was where the power of domination and change were balanced. The Converts found this the most difficult as they had a history of having to negotiate their locational belonging since conversion. While London Church decisively unmutes certain aspects of British Gujarati religio-cultural practises, the tactful interplay of dominance, acceptance and subordination are judiciously articulated and not necessarily permanently fixed.

The use of artefacts of the *divo*, the *saris* and the image of the cross at London Church appear to have had an impact on the people in attendance. One of their goals is to create a place where British Gujarati would feel welcome. For many decades prior to the purpose built *mandirs* that exist in Britain in recent years, the British Gujarati have historically held their Hindu religious gatherings within rented church buildings. However, the difference on the occasion of Priti's event was that those that use the building for Christian gatherings were also present. The location served to help create overlaps and alter the religio-cultural practices by incremental changes to the outlying edges of habitus thus extending the scope of doxa.

The younger British Gujarati Christian viewed the use of *saris* to be an attempt for the visual characterisation of Indianness as a culturally sensitive gesture by the Americans. The location is suitable in the sense that the adaptations create some aesthetic familiarity. This revealed that Americans and Converts can be flexible in their adaptation of 'place'. Priti's family appears to have accepted the temporal nature of the location.

The London Church location became an inclusive boundary for the British Gujarati as they focused their attention on Priti's 'place' of belonging there. The British Gujarati, the Converts and the American missionaries all associated with Priti, which meant in this instance she functioned as the bridge of locational belonging. Each event in the London Church location stretches the boundaries of doxa to renegotiate and widen or perhaps define the pre-conceived ideas of belonging in the British Evangelical Christian and British Gujarati contexts. The relationship of 'space' and 'place' and home will be discussed in the next section.

5.5 The Home and the Diaspora of Location

In the previous section, the use of location to create temporal sites for religio-cultural belonging revealed creative ways to understand space and place. All first generation Converts experience some level of shift in their sense of locational belonging in British Gujarati homes. Much of this is due to the understanding of the purpose of the *mandir*. For Hindus from rural Gujarat, the *mandir* was primarily within the home (Fuller 1988:50). It is an essential part of practice in their diasporic setting as a continuation of the customs from their country of origin (Sahney 2016:324). The home *mandir* area may be a simple print of an icon on a wall, a statue on a shelf, an area of a room or an entire room. The purpose of the public *mandir* is for larger gatherings or festivals.

Prior to the first custom built public *mandir* in Britain in 1995,[19] halls were rented, or old churches were repurposed for annual celebrations for one day or up to two weeks. Some unused church buildings were purchased by local British Gujarati communities and converted into *mandirs*.[20] In multicultural Britain, the public *mandir* serves as a visible presence of Hinduism amongst mosques and churches. The term 'multicultural' is one that must be further explained. Initially, it was used by the government of Canada in the 1970s to create an institutional approach to address the cultural differences in courts, Parliament and interest groups to legally uphold ethno-cultural equality in matters of law and recognition of specific services for communities funded by the government (Harell 2009:2).

The creation of the need of a physical location for Hindu worship in diaspora had a stronger connection to what was assumed as appropriate in Britain, rather than as required by Hindu tradition (Vertovec 2000:94; Knott 1986; Burghart 1987). The use of the Western concept of 'multiculturalism' has therefore contributed to constructing definitions of Hindu beliefs and practices for the British Gujarati that did not exist prior to their migration and is a way to represent themselves or be positioned as a group alongside others within a religious landscape.

The British Gujarati are mostly followers of Swaminarayan within the *Srivaisnava* tradition (Vertovec 2000:93). Prior to migration to the West, there existed a belief (amongst some) in the tangible reality of the *mandir* and the icons (Vasudha Narayana 1985:54). However, upon migration '[many] are wary of being known as idolators; early

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[19] https://londonmandir.baps.org/the-mandir/how-it-was-made-in-detail/ [accessed 2021-07-08]

[20] The first *mandir* was opened in Coventry in 1967 (Burnett 2006).

Western missionary terminology still rings in their ears.'[21] (Narayana 1992:165) The transition toward unified identification by the host country is further reiterated by the prevalence of '*Sanatana Dharma*' as a generalized representation of Hinduism in Britain rather than the regional and socio-political definitions that exist in India.

In the case of the Hindu diaspora, the relevance of a visual location of a public *mandir* became more important in the West. The public *mandir* in the diasporic context has come to 'represent valiant attempts of immigrants to preserve their identity and that of their children' (Williams 1992:5). Similar to their practices in communities in Gujarat, the majority of British Gujarati practising Hindus do not attend the public location on a regular basis, but rather for specific festivals. The home is essentially the primary location for religio-cultural transmission (Knott 1986; Burghart 1987). A locational gathering in the British Gujarati context is both muted in the sense it is restricted by the borders of other religious buildings which have a defined sense of religious belonging. It is also unmuted in the sense that unlike India where Hinduism is identifiable everywhere by outsiders, in British Gujarati Hinduism it is categorised by certain people groups, separate rituals and defined locations.

Rajesh Josh's parents took him and his brother to the family's local *mandir* in London regularly to preserve their culture and tradition. Rajesh and his brother became strongly involved with temple Hinduism as a result of visiting gurus. To the great dismay of their parents, the brothers were recruited by an itinerate Swaminarayan guru to join a religious order and train in India to become international priests and thus renounce all ties, communication and relationships to the family completely for the rest of their lives (Rajesh/inv/1). As priests, Rajesh and his brother were committed to celibacy, thus signalling the end of a family line for their parents. Additionally, the parents would become dependent on relatives in the retirement and renunciation stages of the *ashrama*. This shows that the adaptation of temple Hinduism in diaspora can have a similar impact on the family *dharma* as British Gujarati Christian conversion, individual decisions of practising religion being made independently as is more common in the broader British culture.

The changes in the purpose of the local *mandir* challenge the idea of what visible British Gujarati religious belonging looks like in public. In Gujarat, differentiating people between religious social fields is by dress, name, eating habits, observation of festivals and sometimes physical features. The indigenous British would not be aware of this

[21] Narayana quotes Joanne Punzo Wanghorne, 1985 from the Introduction to *Gods of Flesh, Gods of Stone.*

aspect of cultural knowledge amongst South Asian diaspora. The plurality of belief systems incorporated into Hinduism along with the ideas of *karma* mean that the identification of other people groups is not necessarily negative.[22]

For this reason, leaving the public *mandir* becomes a complex relational and social decision. The ability to display or recognise traditions diminishes as the younger generations of diaspora assimilate to the British culture, resulting in a diminishing understanding of the value of relational networks and social mobility. For the British Gujarati Christian, a change in religious identity must be accompanied by a change in religious identification.

Attending any form of a *mandir* is considered by British Evangelical Christians to be the practice of those who identify as Hindus. For example, British Gujarati homes contain some form of a *mandir* where the same rituals as those in the public *mandir* take place, but with greater frequency. Hence, in order for the British Gujarati Christian to disassociate from their former religious identity, they disengage from their family home. The expectation was from the British Gujarati Christian understanding of the requirement of baptism to turn away from idols. This was evident amongst Converts in London and Leicester. Each of the participants experienced some level of disengagement with the family home. This includes the homes of the extended family as they had to choose between either attending family religio-cultural events or British Evangelical Christian events, but not both.

An adjustment of religious locational belonging must occur as the British Evangelical Christians and Converts identify church attendance as part of the evidence of conversion. Therefore, the choice of being in a home or public *mandir* is identified as a Hindu practice, whereas the choice of walking into a church is identified as a Christian practice. Dislocation from the British Gujarati home *mandir* to relocate to the church has many layers of contextual repercussions.

Distancing from every form of *mandir* means separating from meaning making practices that could be described in terms of 'symbolic violence' beyond the immediate family. Symbolic violence and symbolic capital have similarities in that they are both based within the context of social fields. It is a type of violence that uses power differentials for unconscious pressure toward cultural hegemony (Schubert 2014:185). For the British Gujarati family, the idea of Western Christian locations replacing the

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[22] Although this could be argued from the point of caste discrimination, the issue of caste was not represented in the confines of this research project.

mandir creates a rupture in networks of relational belonging and thus restricts their potential contribution to social mobility.

As an example, Mohan Darshan experienced the dichotomy of belonging that has been discussed in terms of family roles in the previous chapter. Mohan's choice to self-identify as Christian led to public rejection at the home of his relative. The physical structure of the house was the chosen 'place' of exclusive boundary belonging with the terms determined by the person with the most capital. By conversion, Mohan had extracted himself and his wife and children from their extended family and restricted their interactions in British Gujarati religio-cultural locations. He altered his boundary markers and disassociated with public and household *mandirs*.

A change in British Evangelical Christian overseas mission work began to impact the British Evangelical Church in the latter half of the twentieth century as contextual approaches to proselytism became more salient.[23] Mohan, at the suggestion of his Christian minister, started to reconnect with his British Gujarati family in the hope of drawing them toward conversion (Mohan/inv/2). Mohan presumed upon on his previous British Gujarati inclusive boundary markers by re-entering the British Gujarati religio-cultural place. By this, he had misjudged the relative's home as a continued 'place'. The host saw Mohan's presence as an affront to the British Gujarati framework that had previously been rejected due to Christian conversion, and thus perceived Mohan to merely occupy a 'space'.

Likewise, Rani Darshan experienced multiple transitions between spaces and places after her conversion. Her first dislocation was from the *mandir* in her home as she ceased her daily practices. She further withdrew from the communal areas in the family home to her own room. Her lack of interaction then spread to the other extended homes in the family complex. The most serious dislocation resulted in seeking refuge at the home of a missionary family relying on her diaspora of conversion as capital. For the Convert, joining the universal church comes with implicit connection of an extensive family network that is part of the British Gujarati worldview connecting all Converts to Bible characters, deceased saints and Christians around the world. The Convert is taught to learn the practicalities of Christian faith from the Bible. The early Christians of the New Testament were set as examples to be followed by Christians today. However, as a sub-

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[23] David Bosch 1991 *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission,* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

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conscious part of the Convert's background, the Hindu worldview does not isolate the present life from the past and future incarnations.

Rani's change in location-based symbolism made her places of worship and place of belonging in the home seem symbolically violent because of the behaviour of her patrilocal family. Raksha Gupta, Vanita Gregario, and others have similar experiences that connect to the idea of persecution for the sake of the Gospel that is part of the British Evangelical Christian habitus. Rani had sought to temporarily occupy a new 'place' at the home of an American missionary and explained her need of a place to stay with her two daughters: "I thought I could stay until my family sent me money for plane tickets for me and my two daughters" (Rani/inv/1).

The missionary's place could not become hers, even temporarily. She recalls their instructions to her: [They said] "We feel that God is telling you to go back to that family because he has plans for you" (Rani/inv/1). The Western Christians' expression of family and locational belonging was distinctly different than Rani's expectations. Rani's sense of loss of locational belonging in the patrilocal home, however, was redirected by the missionaries who advised her to return. Accepting the authority of the missionaries as leaders in the church is another aspect of British Evangelical Christian habitus. For Converts this is a transfer of authority structure that is part of the British Gujarati family and religio-cultural practice. In Rani's case, she also believed the direction was supernatural as some months later her husband and other patrilocal family members converted to Christianity.

By comparison, Raksha Gupta left her home permanently as she thought in order to belong to the church, and other connections to locations that might compromise religious identification had to be abandoned. She has now recreated a home based on her sense of locational belonging at the London Church. As British Evangelical Christians do not usually place Christian icons in their home, Raksha has gone to great lengths to create a continuation of locational belonging from her church to her residence on the same street. In Raksha's home, there are portions of *sari falls*[24] used to decorate the walls. Attached to them are pages from old calendars with pictures of pastoral countryside scenery inscribed with biblical verses. These create a continuity of new habitus between the London Church and Raksha's home.

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[24] *Sari falls* are strips of fabric attached to the inner bottom edge of the sari that is close to the ground. Its purpose is to invisibly reinforce the sari in the places it is most likely to be damaged.

While the need to display the pictures is not for the purpose of personal worship, these artefacts display symbolic capital similar to the display of the *mandir* in Sunita's home. Both Sunita Darshan and Raksha Gupta appear to utilise prominent symbols within the home. These allude to their projection of religious self-identity to influence their symbolic and therefore social capital for the visibility of others coming into the location. The strength of locational belonging thus unmutes an aspect of expression that goes beyond the spoken declaration of self-identity. Additionally, it satisfies the sense of belonging that is a characteristic in the women's conversion narratives (Brereton 1991, Lucas 2017).

Raksha felt the pull of location from her earliest encounter with Christianity. Her conversion journey was very much influenced by her presence in school in the West Midlands during the 1960s when Christianity had a strong influence in education. Initially this was in the school assembly and classroom, and later in her attempt to live independently at university. During her time at university, she had already attempted to find locational belonging, but no one in the church offered her a place to live. Upon returning home, she felt hostile toward the family's *mandir,* British Gujarati artefacts and her parents' objection to her attending church.

In this case, Raksha is implementing what de Certeau would refer to as a 'tactic' as a technique that she could apply to access belonging (de Certeau 1984:54). She recognised the structural framework of locational belonging in a Christian family home as beyond her grasp. De Certeau's idea of the 'tactic' applies to her understanding of the rigidity of the binary of authoritative belonging:

> As long as I can go to church and get a job and help out if I can and that was basically it. But soon after I came home, every Sunday there was something so that I could not come to church. They started to arrange for suitors to come and see me. (Raksha/inv/2)

She explained 'out of desperation' she looked for 'a way out' of her family home, leading to her suicide attempt. Her angry disengagement was a desperate attempt to unmute her self-identity, yet attempted suicide suggests 'poor self-image' and 'self-hatred' (Brereton 1991:50). I asked why she did not attempt to contact her British Evangelical Church's community. She surmised that it was perhaps for fear of the same rejection she had experienced while at university or perhaps the idea of suicide being considered an unforgivable sin (Raksha/inv/3). This suggests a phase of dislocation of self worth and abandonment as part of her conversion journey.

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She contacted an indigenous British family who though not practising Christians, offered her a place to stay. Her preference for locational belonging was not necessarily within a practising Christian home. She explained, "I wanted a place with no restrictions, just to be able to practise my faith. A place that did not have the idols or restrict my movement outside the house" (Raksha/inv/3).

Several decades after her conversion, while attending the London Church, Raksha reassessed her issues of binary belonging. The gradual restoration of her relationship with her widowed mother, siblings and extended family has been evident in two gatherings hosted at the London Church. Raksha and the church leaders organised a *Yaadgiri*[25] for her father. Her mother and sisters attended along with many British Gujarati, and Converts who had never previously met Raksha's family. The sense of shared place of belonging was apparent as the family participated in shared Christian prayers, stories and *bhajan*[26] (FN/YR). Hence, relationship in location affirmed a place of belonging and holding collective grief. A year later a sixtieth birthday party for Raksha was attended by her children, mother, sisters and various extended family members. Evidence of Raksha's locational belonging as a Convert and British Gujarati, along with family, began from occupying a space where Raksha chose to place herself. The symbolic capital within the family home became far less confrontational due to flexibility of the Converts around their own family.

Dislocation from home is primarily instigated through the British Gujarati Christian's interpretation of the presence of British Gujarati religious artefacts as intrusive and contradictory to the conversion self-identity based on the second of the Ten Commandments.[27] Locational belongingness is negotiated through their own physical existence as they were born into a Gujarati and, therefore, Hindu home.[28] The diaspora of location in conversion begins with the interpretation of the newfound Christian religious identity through the visible presence at the church as the alternative place to the public and home *mandir*. Additionally, the idea of the church community (as a people group) becomes a replacement as their own parents, siblings and relatives are outside of the church family.

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[25] Memorial service.

[26] Call and repeat style of singing in places of worship.

[27] Knowledge and acceptance of the Ten Commandments are part of the British Evangelical Christian habitus discussed in Chapter 1.

[28] https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/24-gujarat.html#google_vignette [accessed 2021-05-20]

The following section will demonstrate how *Rakshabandan* as a celebration is born out of the nature of moving away from the natal home.

5.6 Weaving *Rakshabandan* into Diasporic Locations

This section explains the use of *Rakshabandan* as a form of location-based manoeuvring of symbolic capital that has been continued in diaspora and may be used to strengthen locational belonging. The tradition is one that has continued from Gujarat to Britain. As an event, *Rakshabandan* gains momentum in terms of reaching out to broader locations through movement beyond the boundaries of nationality and religion. *Rakshabandan* is viewed as an event that is not bound to any religious site thus changes in practice and might adapt to broader British Gujarati contexts and locations.

In terms of location, the core of the practice of *Rakshabandan* is based on maintaining the locational contact between the natal home and the patrilocal home. The most basic act of the festival is the sister tying the *rakhi* on the wrist of her brother.[29] Looking at the Gujarati historical tradition of *Rakshabandan* in a gender role-based location, the birth of a daughter and the birth of a son are differentiated by the presumption of future locational belonging.

Along with other gender based explicit and implicit understandings, the daughter is raised with the idea of the temporary nature of the natal home through the annual celebration of *Rakshabandan*. Using de Certeau's definition of space as a geographical location rather than a place of belonging, the birth of a son symbolises his entrance into a lifelong place of locational belonging where he will one day bring a wife and future generations.

Rakshabandan as a festival represents the recognition and remembrance of the gendered role positions and the anticipated habitus as presumed patterns of behaviour based on location. It might also be seen as located in between space and place. The natal home for the daughter is the 'space' of her birth. Traditionally, it holds a temporary place of belonging in terms of the relationship with parents and siblings but not the place of long-term belonging in the same way as the son's natal home. *Rakshabandan* is thus a moderator of displacement.

De Certeau (1984) discusses one of the manners by which displacement extends acculturation that contributes to the identification of a person depending on where they

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[29] As mentioned in the British Gujarati habitus section in Chapter 1, the *rakhi* cord or bracelet may be sent in the post or these days is sent as a virtual greeting.

live or work. He uses the example of an African living in Paris who must create a way of life in the cultural structure of a foreign space. Within the constraints of language and location the displaced individual creatively brings about plurality. There is an art to existing in the 'in between' in finding the access to what, or perhaps also who is available.

Rakshabandan is a powerful tactic or technique in the sense that the sister, daughter or wife, by continuing the tradition is actively renewing the memories of childhood bonds with brothers and cousins' brothers in the natal home and thus locational belonging. De Certeau also discusses the idea of trajectory as perhaps an indication that is overlooked by the focus on two fixed points of space and place as opposites (Wild 2012:7**).** In other words, the space between the two places is not empty. Each *Rakshabandan* creates its own social field with habitus, rules, capitals, agents and its own doxa.

Where space and place are fixed in terms of the natal and patrilocal home, the trajectory like the *rakhi*, as a social field is a movable piece. Without necessarily changing the locations of 'space' and 'place', the *rakhi* can be resourcefully used for the repetitive pattern of affirming old and designing new relational ties, thus creatively weaving relationships into and between the two locations of natal and patrilocal homes.

Rakshabandan as a habitus is a product of history that creates individual and collective practices. Bourdieu refers to 'the system of dispositions' enabling past patterns to survive and disseminate into the future (1977:82). In this sense, Stuart Hall's theory of position and representation as reassigning and recurring as a constant state of aporia, pulls along something of the past that survives, because it is flexible (Hall 1996). To take advantage of the flexibility is to use a tactic. However, in the state of aporia, the idea of dominant and subordinate may still be polarised. Within the practise of *Rakshabandan* there exists a framework that is sustained and re-created by the power of the subordinate and which can push or pull on the dominant group. While muted group theory is focused on the dominant holding power (West & Turner 2017; Stanback & Pearce 1981; Smith-Barkman 2018), the location of *Rakshabandan* stimulates the power and position of the subordinate.

The unmuting power of the subordinate in *Rakshabandan* is owned by the married women in the patrilocal home. Their state of aporia may be used to the advantage of the innovative new network connections in the same way that Appadurai (1996) references the creation of specific 'scapes'. The choice of the women to tie the *rakhi* is an agency unavailable to men. Women's ability to create new network connections strengthens their locational agency. The locational practice of *Rakshabandan* provides an alternative

tactical route that might provide an observable connection to influence 'scapes' as created networks.

Simulating a more flexible active habitus, *Rakshabandan* participants have the ability to readily sense and know relevant doxa for the appropriate social field. The location of the *Rakshabandan* practices cannot be measured by what is visible in Christian places of belonging but in habitus that was created in locations prior to conversion. This multiplicity of locational belonging takes past and present, social and location belonging into consideration.

As adults engaging in the *Rakshabandan* ritual of tying/sending the *rakhi,* the tradition is passed down to their younger generation of children. Though the traditional positioning of male and female births no longer holds the same significance, the continuation of relational bonds recognised and honoured affirms locational belonging. The symbolic capital of brother/sister relationships is affirmed and valued despite the passage of time and change in location. Natal and patrilocal homes are both individual yet overlapping social fields. While there will be overlapping doxa, individual agents within the respective social fields exercise their agency and use capitals at variable levels. Hence, the value of a wife, mother, sister, daughter, all hold varying levels of symbolic capital influenced by agency depending on location.

The observance of *Rakshabandan* provides an example of how a sense of locational belonging is maintained, manoeuvred and negotiated from the earliest experience of being in place within the natal home.[30] The British Gujarati scattered around the world create a link with their practices in Gujarat to their present location in diaspora, even though they rely on sending *rakhi* by post or more recently through internet images of greetings. In this sense, continuing to follow practices from their distant ancestral places not only memorialises and unmutes the past, but offers the potential of future locational belongings.

Using Bourdieu, the social structure in the act of *Rakshabandan*, acknowledges the gender aspects of social position that contributes to the memory of the strength of locational belonging in a natal home. The patrilocal household, especially those with multiple sons, becomes the central focus of many representatives of different families who are visiting various *vaow*.[31] Hence, the belief in the benefit of cycles of belonging in natal and patrilocal homes affirms network connections, but as the family continues to

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[30] See the section on British Gujarati habitus in Chapter 1.

[31] *Vaow* means daughter-in-law.

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change through life events, new people are added, bringing potential networks of locational belonging. *Rakshabandan* is the reminder of a location based upon social capital in natal homes and the cyclical aspect of family relationships connected to the idea of the temporal nature of the location of home.

Rakshabandan is thus a built-in 'tactic' that points to areas of flexibility within the structure as the British Gujarati family. Even though multi-generational extended family households may be rare, the adaptability of observances maintains the significance of locational practices of *Rakshabandan* between brothers and sisters and include voluntary kin. This shows something of the intertwining and integration of locational belongings and familial belongings beyond religio-cultural boundaries.

Using the data from the *Rakshabandan* questionnaire, sixteen of the thirty Convert participants had discontinued celebrating *Rakshabandan*. The locational impact goes far beyond the sixteen individual Converts or immediate family households. By not maintaining visits to the family home, the male Convert's sisters do not have visits from their brothers on *Rakshabandan* and the female Convert's brothers do not visit their sisters' homes. Therefore, the continuation of expanding relational networks between the natal and patrilocal homes ceases.

The Convert's children born after conversion of their parents do not have the same relationships with the extended family home as their British Gujarati cousins. The children of Converts have been influenced by the idea that the Hindu family home was a place of foreign gods and rituals.[32] The Convert's lack of involvement begins with the change of their physical presence in visiting the family home. This confirms the extraction from the family home and British Gujarati locations. A Convert's life, prior to conversion understood events as part of the practice of locational belonging. By no longer celebrating events, they extract and mute themselves from the locations of familiarity and continuity in a way that cannot be transferred to the British Evangelical Church.

The Convert's attendance at locational visits during events and celebrations is very rare. This was especially apparent amongst the Converts in Leicester and amongst the other Converts that I came into contact with during my engagement with the community since beginning this research. Hence, the younger generations of the British Gujarati and Converts will have a diminishing understanding of the shared value of locational belongings. This is made all the more significant due to the fragmentation of the British Gujarati extended family in diaspora.

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[32] See the section British Evangelical Christian Habitus in Chapter 1.

Rakshabandan indicates the diasporic nature of British Gujarati social construction that creates places out of spaces by recurring affirmations through inclusive boundaries. Repeated *Rakshabandan* practices broaden the networks that connect spaces and places by relationship. At the same time, the recollections of past locations into their present suggest a foreshadowing of the future in terms of the temporal and the future locational cycles of movement.

In terms of the Convert's practices, much of what makes sense in family relationships is limited by characterisations of the binary of belonging to Christian locations or British Gujarati (and therefore Hindu) locations. This is especially true after the ceremony of baptism as a marker of rejection of the pre-Christian identity.[33] However, within the idea of conversion to Christianity and baptism, the sense of family is altered. The universal family of Christianity uses the positional roles of brother and sister as a label of group belonging. Within this alteration of the idea of locational and familial belonging of the Convert, perhaps *Rakshabandan* rather than being fixed in the location of former British Gujarati practice could provide a new trajectory, not between space and place, but between place and place.

The location of *Rakshabandan* cannot be merely measured by what is visible in Christian places of belonging but also in habitus that was created in a location, prior to conversion. This multiplicity of locational belonging takes past and present, social and locational belonging into consideration. For the Convert, a more flexible active habitus includes the ability to readily sense and know the relevant doxa for the significant social field.

This section has detailed how *Rakshabandan* has been utilised as a way to broaden locational belonging by reinforcing brother/sister relationships, and increasing the network of belonging by including voluntary kin. As the practices do not use any type of purely religious symbolic act in terms of ritual practices in a *mandir, Rakshabandan* could be adapted to unmute the Convert's expression of self-identity of British by location, Gujarati by heritage and Christian by choice.

5.8 Conclusion

By using Bourdieu's theory of social fields and de Certeau's theory of physical movement from space to place, this chapter has discussed the different experiences of Converts and

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[33] As above.

their choices of subjective locational belonging. The need of change in location for their place of worship is a part of the identification of British Gujarati Christian conversion. However, once the convert enters the church location their experiences both within and without the *mandir* and church locations are varied and cause reactions and repercussions beyond the individual.

When relocating from the *mandir* as a religious location to the church, the British Evangelical Church provides a certain level of welcome into their 'place'. However, the Converts as a small minority of a minority ethnic group in Britain are something of a visual anomaly in the church. The British Evangelical Church responds from within its own framework of doxa and habitus. While welcoming the Convert to the space, the church may not necessarily understand the religio-cultural challenges of the convert having to leave their place amongst the British Gujarati, and find a place in the church.

In the section on Converts and their locational belonging, this chapter shows how the London Church attempts to create a sense of inclusive boundary markers by the use of artefacts to unmute the original conversion binary of locational belonging. The multiplicity of locational belonging is negotiated by those who understand the structural framework. However, the flexibility of location is demonstrated through the subjective temporary belonging displayed by Priti's family at the baby shower. Some artefacts have a temporal locational belonging subject to the interpretation of those present at a particular moment in time. This relates to Paul Gilroy's metaphor of the ships where locational belonging was in the transition itself.

The hybridity of the moment at the baby shower is captured by the reaction of the American missionaries. In the moment, the seemingly small details of food artefacts representing three different continents create not only a cultural hybridity but also the hybrid nature of locational belonging of a food table in a church building in Britain adapted by the Americans for the British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian family.

The negotiation of home and the diaspora of location for Mohan Darshan goes through waves of subjective acceptance and rejection. This brings into play Gilroy's ideas of a hybridity that is created along the journey rather than through predetermined plans. This is evidenced in the symbolic capital of Mohan's relative and his use of hostile symbolic violence toward Mohan.

Rani Darshan's physical movements are negotiated through role identity that is unmuted based upon agency in locations. Rani made three attempts to relocate since conversion, firstly from the *mandir* to find a place to worship. Secondly, she attempted

leaving the patrilocal home to escape hostility. Thirdly, she was a British Gujarati Convert 'other' amongst missionaries and indigenous Kenyans in the church.

By British Gujarati perspectives, Raksha Gupta was culturally 'less fortunate' as a single young adult living alone. She attempted to use her British Evangelical Church's religious capital to become part of the universal Christian family initially, in the hope of someone in the church offering her a home as she changed location. Later, as a Convert in the London Church, she possessed sufficient agency within the location to unmute her religio-cultural capital. Through the replication of visual artefacts in the London Church, Raksha reinforces her sense of locational belonging to her church and her home.

For Rani Darshan and Raksha Gupta, relying on positions and representations based on their symbolic capital through artefacts and positions of people in locations changed their levels of agency. Like Priti, they were able to unmute their British Gujarati families by inviting them into the Christian location to celebrate hybrid events of a memorial service and a birthday celebration.

Beyond the aesthetics of the physical location, the efforts to make a designated 'space' a 'place' of worship attempt reconstructions that resonate with cultural and symbolic practices. The micro-isolation of one cultural artefact of a *sari* was of less significance to the Converts than it was to the American missionary. This was meant to provide the feeling of cultural inclusivity as part of the strategy of practice for the Converts. The implication is that the American missionaries had made a way to attempt to create a 'place' by their understanding of unmuting the subordinate Convert's experience.

Events and celebrations become the temporary draw toward a location through the value of symbolic and religio-cultural capitals being negotiated in individual households as they draw others in. *Rakshabandan* while originating in India, is location based through the celebration of events where practices are hybridised through people movements. As more people interact with the location, they stretch the boundary and readjust the concept of the overarching framework of locational belonging.

The breadth of locational belonging shows the overlapping of social fields and networks to such a degree that the connection between geographical spaces becomes less relevant than relational 'place'. The London Church leadership endeavoured to strike a balance of Western and British Gujarati practices of Christianity. British Gujarati Hinduism and Christianity are two broad social fields demarcated by buildings dedicated to those who practise the appropriate rituals dependant on location. De Certeau (1984)

refers to the 'practice of order' that is constructed by 'others' to keep social fields 'in place'. However, the 'place' itself is not fixed by location alone but also by the salience of cultural capitals with ever changing symbolic currency.

The space in Britain's religious landscape has been affected by the movements and settling of diaspora not simply by public 'multicultural policies,' but also by subtle everyday activities. That is, the British Gujarati diaspora lacking their own place, take over a space in order to manipulate networks of previously established representations of religious space belonging. They have every expectation of being included in the church building as their new social field. The issue of British Gujarati Christian multiple dislocations as geographic diaspora is then disrupted by conversion as an ideological diaspora. Furthermore, converts are dislocated from their family, perhaps dislocated in or from the home and never quite grounded in a place, thus creating a further degree of diaspora within and apart from the British Gujarati diaspora.

This chapter has focused on some of the complications of changing the place of worship from the *mandir* to the church and the challenges for the individual British Gujarati Christian, their families and those already within the British Evangelical Church's location. It has also demonstrated the complexity of losing the sense of home while attempting to navigate the binary of locational belonging from a Convert. By beginning to explore the possibilities of negotiating multi-locational belonging as enacted in the moment by individual Converts, it has prepared the way for a deeper analysis of the responsibility of decision-making in areas of religio-cultural locations.

The following chapter will address the issue of the challenges of lived authority that come with the conversion of religious identity. It will provide examples of different ideas regarding how life-changing decisions are made in the light of self-identity as Converts

Chapter 6: Challenging Practices

6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters looked at the broader aspects of relationship and belonging within the family group and church location settings. This chapter draws out personal aspects of decision-making using the personal historical details of life after conversion. I begin this chapter with a brief introduction to the predicament of the British Gujarati Christian Convert in relation to the process of decision-making.

I will then offer the theories used to analyse the data of symbolic interaction and the connection with muted group theory and ideas of position and representation. This will be followed by looking at three sections each of which reveals three different Converts and their families and the methods of making decisions based on their personal circumstances. The next section offers individual choices that, rather than being based on important life events, are based on day-to-day contexts. The section that follows will analyse two different British Gujarati (BG) festivals and how they are adjusted to fit into their ideas of celebration in diaspora. The chapter concludes with a summary of the Converts' ability to challenge authoritative structures through personal agency in and amongst multiple social fields.

6.2 Personal Challenges of the British Christian Convert

The individual lived realities of Converts are a combination of challenges in changes in the way they practise and how those choices are made. The conversion process is based upon the British Evangelical Church's expression of Christianity within the social field of Britain. This is followed by a disconnection from the *mandir,* and the movement to church; a locational shift that serves to be identified as Christian by the British Evangelical Christian, thus a public self-identification as a Christian instead of a Hindu. While there are multiple variations to this pattern, some of the practical challenges of decision-making present a deeper understanding of Converts' lives.

My research has revealed something of the creativity of personal compromises in lived experiences of individual symbolic interactions. The Convert must re-orientate and re-mobilise their sense of self rather than extracting themselves from either British Gujarati or British Evangelical Christian social fields.

There is also a gender aspect to the decision choices made by the converts. The women were the first converts in their family. In two of the participant families, husbands

converted as a result of their wife's decision. The Law of Manu states that the husband should have control over his wife. However, the women carry out the daily rituals on behalf of the family, hence there must be a certain ability to push against the structure of authority from within the British Gujarati field. At the same time female Converts must push against the traditionally male spiritual authority within the British Evangelical field.

6.3 Theoretical Applications of Practised Authority

Symbolic interactionism was developed by Herbert Blumer from the ideas of Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead based on the idea that people are social products. Blumer believed individuals live in a world that is constructed through their social interactions, more specifically, on the interpretation of meanings they give to objects, behaviours, and events, thoughts and actions. The interpretations may vary from place to place, time to time, and also person to person. Their actions in specific events and their changes in practices are a result of the spontaneity of individual action (Blumer 1969).

Stuart Hall's discussion on diaspora theory connects to the idea of symbolic interaction in that cultural identity as a symbol in diaspora is approached and interacted with in two ways. The first is for the cultural identity of the diaspora as 'one true self' concealed by artificially created versions of the self, based upon identification and categorisation by others (1994:223). When a Convert enters the British Evangelical Church, the agents within the social field attempt to categorise it. The initial assumption generally is that she is unfamiliar with the 'rules of the game' within the field. The Converts are often directed to other marginalised agents in the social field who share similar characteristics of ethnicity or grouped with others who also do not represent the same characteristics of the majority.[1] This is directly related to a categorisation of geographic diaspora stated by Safran and quoted by Cohen. '[D]iaspora was deployed as "a metaphoric designation' for expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*" (2008:1).

The second is the conflict of cultural identity as a constant state of 'aporia' or irresolvable contradiction. In the case of British Gujarati Christians, their conversion experiences cannot be analysed in the same way as other Converts. Conversion may be

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[1] When they occur, cases of mistaken identification based on ethnicity are most brushed aside as insignificant by the Converts. They are more often acknowledged and discussed amongst us. Appendix L details an occasion where an artificially created identification was shared within our Converts' group.

from inactive to active belief, internal conversion from one denomination to another, or tradition transition (Rambo 1995), the latter summarising the complete change in belief system undergone by British Gujarati Christian Converts.

The individual Convert identity cannot be expunged (de Certeau 1984:14). It is the transient nature of the 'tactic' that enables the individual to seize the opportunity. De Certeau likens the manipulation of cultures to moving into altered spaces that are changed through the accents, turns of phrase and histories of individual practitioners, thus expressing conflict and authenticating individual presence (1984:xxii). These adjustments contribute to a change in self-identity and a lifestyle as a Christian.

The symbolism of Christian conversion for the British Gujarati Christian thus stretches beyond identification by others, into personal lived experiences. Apart from the significant observable gestures as attempts to make the shift of identification by others obvious, there are some subtle verbal, visual and learned gestures that unmute the individual convert. Muted group theory addresses dominance and references group unmuting (Ardener 1977; Stanback & Pearce; Smith-Barkman 2018).

There is an interplay amongst the agents in social fields as they attempt to manipulate structural authority to simultaneously increase capitals and uphold doxa. However, not all agents share identical social fields. Hence in the attempts to influence structural authority to gain benefit within one social field, there are complications for agents in their personal range of social fields. Assumptions could be made regarding the similarities between the agents and their intersection in other social fields.

An example of the problem of changing authority and the impact on social fields became apparent during this research. While I share some overlapping social fields with the participants of this research, there has been an impact on how the Converts have unmuted. In the writing of this thesis, my involvement has contributed to our collective unmuting. However, the participants do not share any of my academic social fields. Where we share overlapping British Evangelical social fields, my unmuted voice in academia cannot be applied in the same way by and amongst all British Gujarati Christians. Muted group theory is therefore selectively relevant at the individualised personal level beyond the limits of relational family roles, and the contexts of the communal locational belonging.

Stephane Dufoix's concept of modes of diaspora are applicable to the movement of the convert as dispersed from their religious group of origin (2003:xv). The modes or styles of diaspora are not limited to a single linear definition based upon external

categorisation. Instead, amongst some Converts, there is an acknowledgement and utilisation of double consciousness as an asset rather than as a divisive dispute between dominance and subordination. While Dufoix's modes have specific definitions, the individual convert's actions between the modes are part of a recurring reflexive helix. These cyclical actions occur through reviewing past patterns of behaviours to adjust for present circumstances. This is especially relevant as Converts make decisions when marking specific important life stages such as births, deaths and marriages.

British Gujarati practices are primarily modelled by replication and imitation through family roles and secondarily through the community. The participants had the common experience in that they followed the Hindu practices by imitation in Britain and India (Vertovec 2000:94). The symbolic authority of the mother as the significant figure in modelling prayers, traditions, and appropriate behaviour is rejected at conversion. The mother holds the responsibility of passing on religious practices, especially to the daughters. Ethical and moral leadership is part of recognising the patterns of authority that are demonstrated through religio-cultural practices in the home.

These patterns of decision-making are reinforced by social interactions with others who confirm the same meanings toward the same ideas. In the case of the British Gujarati Christians, conversions to Christianity are their 'idea' or their act. The meanings of the objects and ideas may be adjusted through interpretation (Williams & von Lehn 2020). Using Bourdieu's theory of habitus formed through a scheme of learned dispositions at the point of practice, the individual making the choices arranges and consolidates their decisions based upon their own ability to use their social agency as they see fit in their construction of meaning.

The challenge of the flexibility of individual choice is that deliberated changes in habitus influence symbolic capitals that strategically impact the individual agency of others. This is clearly evidenced in the Bhakt family's use of symbolic capital along with the doxa in the church and their choice to have their daughters baptised. Simultaneously, they used the symbolic life event of baptism to declare a change in their family doxa and habitus to their British Gujarati family by drawing on their own agency with their family and the symbolic authority of the church's leadership. Alternatively, such a reimagining of symbols can also be understood using de Certeau's implementation of 'tactics' as techniques. The move from peripheral belonging in a 'space' progresses through gaining the necessary understanding and influence within the overarching framework of power to belonging more centrally in 'place'.

Blumer's (1969) theory of symbolic interaction together with Bourdieu's theory of habitus impacting symbolic capital, and de Certeau's theory of access to structured authority through tactics all appear to connect the concepts of interacting within a given social field and then adjusting personal practices amongst other agents to fit into multiple social fields. The issue is the diasporic nature of the interpretations as the dissemination of symbols as objects and as ideas in the hands of those with agency at the opportune moment. The negotiation of personal behaviours that lead to change becomes visible through layers of decision making, hence this is not a linear progression but as Stuart Hall notes, is always a work in progress or 'aporia' (1994:222, 223). Continuing adjustment and negotiations of personal practices are indicated through the ongoing subjective decisions that are discussed in the sections that follow.

6.4 Three British Gujarati Christian Conversion Examples and Decision Choices

The first of the British Gujarati Christian converts is Raksha Gupta and her ongoing adjustments and negotiations of personal practices. The next is Rani Darshan and how individuals in her family interact with their Christian identity. The Bhakt family are the third example of conversion, representing a different era of first generation Converts. Priti Bhakt, like Rani Darshan, is the first convert in the family. Priti and her husband Prakash show evidence of directing their religio-cultural identities in how they use the London Church.

6.4.1 Raksha

In this section, I once again turn to the narrative of Raksha Gupta and her childhood memories of school that she believes provide the background of her decision to convert to Christianity:

> I remember hearing stories about people like Elijah and thinking, wow, that's an amazing story, but the supply teacher set a challenge saying, "Who can tell me where this story is found?" But I can remember one of the lads in my class, I remember his name as well, came back and said, "I know it's in 1 Kings". I mean I know where it is now, but he just rattled it off. And I remember somebody, I can't remember who it was, saying, "That story is found in the Bible." But I was just impressed that anyone would know something so well that could tell you where those stories were. You know it was something I admired really. Until then I had never read the Bible as such. (Raksha/inv/2)

This excerpt reveals Raksha's memory of interaction with the cultural and institutional capitals of education in the classroom. She saw the value of interacting with

knowledge for cultural capital through the Bible. Recognizing the gap in her understanding of British culture, she became a frequent visitor to the library to read the Bible. She visited a church where she was told that if she attended six consecutive times, she would get a Bible of her own. Raksha's interactions with the symbols of religio-cultural identity thus moved toward Western Christian religious expression. This was a significant difference for Raksha for whom like all the other Converts, the comprehension of British Gujarati Hindu identity begins and is sustained by imitating practices at home rather than engaging with religio-cultural ideas through texts.

Raksha's conversion process begins with her remembered experience. Her engagement with Christianity came through multiple sources within the British culture through the school, her friends and the church. She felt compelled to go against her parents' wishes in her desire to attend church rather than take part in the British Gujarati rituals in the home. She furthers herself from their religio-cultural practices as she speaks about her mother having 'Hindu idols' in the house which she believed was a sign they would 'go to the other place, that was not good.'[2] During the time she had been in school, sufficient symbolic interaction had influenced Raksha to interpret the symbol of her parents' religious practices as being contrary to Christianity. This reveals that even at a young age, she, like many British Gujarati, was surrounded by the influence of British Christianity as an opposition to her family's religio-cultural identity. It was significant enough to cause Raksha to decide her own and her parents' religion needed to be replaced by Christianity leading to her conversion.

One participant mentioned a Hindu sacred text called the *Ramayana*. Jivan remembers when he was a child that people gathered at his family home to listen to his father recite it from memory at community gatherings. Jivan had never sought to interact with the *Ramayana* beyond a recitation. Decades later upon being given a Bible by a colleague he found himself more confused:

> I tried to accept, to read it for my knowledge of history like Ramayana. Reading [Bible] by myself I was not able to grasp the precise message. To get correct understanding of the scriptures I started attending a church and joined a local student Bible class in West End in London. Having grasped the biblical truth, I acknowledged and accepted God as the Father who had sent His only Son Jesus to redeem the fallen race of mankind. (Jivan/inv/1)

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[2] Beyond Hindu stories or legends of living creatures returning to earth in a different incarnation, none of the BGC recall any teaching of life after death.

Jivan interacted with Christianity through attempting to understand the text both as historical yet a mythological artefact. He soon found that to understand the Bible, it had to be explained to him by the British Evangelical Christians. His interaction with the *Ramayana* was by recitation, as an exercise displayed in front of others. The influence of religious authority through references to text rather than through imitating family members led to a difference in the way practices are authorised. Where the church habitus has some kind of link to the Bible in their practice, the British Gujarati domestic Hindu habitus creates links based upon the practices imitated and modified, with little connection to temple Hinduism and texts.

As Converts negotiate the practicalities of their actions through relationship roles and locational belonging, they are contributing their own ideas to culture. De Certeau states "Culture consists in what someone does for him- or herself, and not for the boss" (de Certeau 1974:275). Challenging authority as an aspect of 'culture,' the individual's processes of decision making to choose personal individual conversion and ongoing practices of authority are realised. The self as the 'boss' enunciates authority but must also be negotiated within a social field.

While a specific culture may be identified and defined differently depending on positional perspective, the individual who is a part of the culture is constantly adjusting and contributing to the overall culture. Definitions and identifications may rely on categorisation, but it is the individual's deliberated actions from within that form and reform the culture. It is the recurring question within muted group theory of the subordinate group. They must resolve how to use the dominant language or what speaks for whom and how that affects personal authorities in multifaceted living (Smith-Barkman 2018:6).

Raksha changed her name to Roxie or Ray shortly after her conversion for what she states was the sake of convenience in pronunciation for the British. The idea of her being her own 'boss' culturally was part of the draw toward Christianity and away from her British Gujarati background. Four decades later, when she began attending London Church, her choice to reclaim her Gujarati name reveals the agency of owning her cultural capital. Even though the authority of the name is initially with the parents or elder generation, as David Smith drawing on Al-Amzeh notes, naming is far from an innocent activity. It controls identities and defines a historical focus (Smith 2003:5).

In Raksha's case, upon conversion she recreated a version of herself that she believed would be more suitable to her new self-identity. Her identity as a Christian in

the church was important enough to rename herself and in effect separate her from her history. The former Raksha was replaced by Roxie who was 'a new creation in Christ'.[3] In a sense, her choice of her Christian self-identity began a new future history.

When Raksha chose to return to her birth name, it was her decision to re-acknowledge her Gujaratiness (Raksha/inv/2). Her entry to British Gujarati Christian culture in 2013 may then be viewed through Helga Wild's essay on de Certeau where she states, "[De] Certeau posited the possibility for everyone to creatively explore the interstitial spaces and to design new paths" (2012:7). Raksha's explorations of the interstitial spaces serve to rearrange the relevance of the order of her self-identity. Sometimes Convert self-identity is primarily Christian, then British, then Gujarati. At other times, this is primarily British, then Gujarati, then Christian. This is an ongoing matter of personal choice. Much of the rearranging of the identities is the Convert's personal interactions in the constant interplay between self-identity and identification by others. The interstitial spaces are between British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian and British Evangelical Christian.

The 1.5[4] and 2nd generation British Gujarati who attended school in Britain shared similarities in some of their earliest memories of British religio-cultural habitus and capital. Christianity was primarily understood by school-age British Gujarati through the local school assemblies or religious education classes.[5] Part of the 1st generation British Gujarati's indirect understanding of education is located in the student stage of the *ashrama*.[6]

The role of British Gujarati parents to instruct their children is passed on to the teacher. The ethical expectation is transmitted sometimes vocally through the mantra,[7] '*Mata, Pita, Guru, Deva* '[8] meaning *mother, father, teacher, God*. The interpretation refers to the importance of the authoritative role of the teacher in the student stage of the individual's life. The relationship between the student and the teacher brings access to

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[3] See the section British Evangelical Christian habitus in Chapter 1.

[4] 1.5 generation are those children approximately between the ages of 4 to 11 (Rubén G. Rumbaut, 2004).

[5] See Appendix A and B.

[6] *Ashrama* refers to the four stages of life: student, householder, retiree, renunciate. Each is marked by significant life events.

[7] Rather than the Hindu use of *mantra,* I use the word '*mantra*' in the English sense as meaning an often repeated statement.

[8] Sanskrit.

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education that will benefit the individual's future life stages, as well as the family and the community networks.

The teacher in their symbolic role, possesses a level of influence to lead the child toward her path toward God for the good of personal and familial *dharma*. British Gujarati parents rarely question what their children are taught in school, based on the understanding that knowledge is purifying. They are not necessarily cognizant of the limited portrayal of Gujarat in the British culture and the effect upon their children's sense of Gujaratiness.

The 1st generation British Gujarati have lived through part of the history of the British building its wealth and influence through acquiring India's (and other countries) natural resources. The authoritative framework of the British cultural spaces during the mid to latter half of the twentieth century was relatively fixed and represented within the postcolonial historical setting that viewed India as backward, uneducated and poor. This perspective, while diminishing over time, still influences the British Gujarati social fields.

The cultural spaces are beyond family role relationships or relocating the habit of the place of worship. The gaps are in a lack of knowledge or experience of where overlaps are possible or beneficial and where inappropriate actions might lead to fractures that increase isolation or extraction. The spaces are negotiated through internal personal decisions influenced by direct and indirect perceptions. For the 2nd generation British Gujarati, British education and living within the British community meant there were gaps in their understanding of their family history and connection to domestic and temple worship in India and their understanding of life cycles. The challenges of personal choices for areas of action contribute to the re-creation of practices. These are continually evolving and rearranging as each recurrence of practice contributes to habitus but at the same time the micro adjustments of practice push the boundaries of habitus. This stimulates the flow in between the British Gujarati, Converts' and British Evangelical Christians' self-identities that blur the boundaries and allow for personal interpretations, challenges, and exchanges.

The specific moments in time when self-identity and identification are personally challenged by individual Converts are evidenced in variety of accounts as shared by the family members of Rani Darshan. Her family consists of her natal and patrilocal kin representing multiple generations of diaspora, and her children who represent 2nd generation British Gujarati Christian Converts. These will be explored in the following section.

6.4.2 Rani, Mohan, Kanta, Bhanu and Anand Darshan

While Raksha Gupta is the only Convert in her natal family, Rani and Mohan Darshan would identify themselves, and their nuclear family, and Mohan's natal family as Christians. Each member of the nuclear family self-identified as Christian at some point. At the time of Rani's conversion, the oldest daughter, Kanta was four years old and the second daughter, Bhanu was around eighteen months old. The youngest child is their son, Anand, who was born eighteen months later, approximately four years before their father Mohan's conversion. This section will address the different interplays between symbols, capitals, agency, and authoritative frameworks of individuals within one family unit. It will also use the experience of Sunita Darji, who like Rani, was deeply connected to the regular personal religious rituals on behalf of her family. Sunita's agency and capitals vary greatly from Rani, revealing the differences in capitals and the ways expressions of agency connect to symbolic capitals.

Despite all of Rani's previous positive interactions with the practices of Hinduism through childhood, her conversion was based upon her supernatural experience with what she perceived as a malevolent symbol of Hinduism. She recalls:

> I saw a figure of a half man and half goat coming towards me. At first, I thought, "This can't be real!" You don't normally see things like this. But as it began to draw nearer, I began to realise that it was real. It had a Hari Krishna type *dhoti*[9] on, but it was from the waist down to the knees. He had his head shaven and a ponytail. From the waist up, he was bare except for a saffron sash on his shoulder. Also, he had a cord only Brahmins wear also on the left shoulder which is normally worn on the right. I was so scared right? Because it was horrific half man, half goat you don't see in everyday life. So being scared I called out to "God! God!" Nothing happened. I called "God of righteousness whoever you are help me!" I heard a voice in my right ear. "I will meet you in the Bible." (Rani/inv/1)

Rani had shared her feelings of isolation and rejection in the patrilocal home prior to her conversion. Her sense of worth in her patrilocal network came through her commitment to daily *puja* rituals and fasting. She made a comparison between herself and the other women in the family. Speaking of her pre-conversion practices, "I used to

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[9] Hari Krishna type *dhoti* refers to the orange loin cloth worn by members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON).

do *diva* in the morning, and I fasted most days, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday".[10] These practices followed the pattern of her mother and increased after marriage.:

> I recall when we had a certain fast where once a year every married woman would fast for their husband [*Jaya Parvati* fast]. We had women fasting with me, but none of them would adhere to the fast and nightly staying awake. When it was full night, they would go until about twelve max, and then, even while fasting you were to abstain from salt and other things. So anyway, I would go through the night without sleeping and the next day in order that my fast would work and my husband would have a long life. (Rani/inv/1)

Coupled with her feelings of isolation and marginalisation, Rani's sense of agency felt minimal. The efforts to belong and develop a positive self-image were based upon a competitiveness against the other women in the patrilocal family. Her actions were attempts to create a sense of acceptance and demonstrate her feelings of entrapment that Brereton (1991) and Lucas (2017) noted were especially characteristic in the motives for conversion of women. Rani's children and other family members stated their belief that her feelings of rejection contributed to her conversion (AnandD/inv/1; JayeshD/inv/1).

Within de Certeau's idea of the authoritative structure, (1984) Rani's behaviour appears to fit Bourdieu's idea of strategy as a way to gain access and influence (1977:72). In Rani's case, having little capital of her own, she was motivated to use her agency in areas where she might be able to gain further capital. Her perceived ability to influence the length of her husband's life is perhaps less relevant to the purpose of the fast, than the other women and elders noticing her effort and, therefore, perhaps crediting her husband's success in part, to Rani's religious practices. Rani had no assurance of the intrinsic value of the tactic to access the structure to increase capital and thus influence doxa.

After Rani's conversion, an alternate symbolic capital required a change in the habitus as 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1990:67). There are similarities between Rani Darshan's experiences and Sunita Darji's experiences. Sunita's social situation of abandonment, homelessness and being a pregnant single parent of three children, meant she had no foreseeable prospects to access capital in her British Gujarati social field. Both Rani and Sunita, in their very different settings, used whatever agency they believed was available to them as individuals. Their decisions to interact with new symbols in an alternate authoritative framework freed them from the control of those within a system where efforts were constrained due to the hierarchical system. In their recollections of

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[10] These fasts usually allow the consumption of tea, water, and some fruit. One simple (vegetarian) meal is usually taken in the evening. The fast does not end until the next morning.

pre-conversion life, they believed themselves to be under the control of the dominant group. This was to such a degree that all their efforts to unmute their self-identity by playing by 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1997), or submitting to the structural framework of authority in patterns of everyday life (De Certeau 1984) were in vain.

Their conversion brought a change to their conception of hierarchy of social fields. Prior to conversion, Rani Darshan and Sunita Darji not only had little access to forms of capital, but their personal agency handicapped opportunities to affect any chance to increase their capitals in British Gujarati social fields. Post-conversion, Rani and Sunita functioned in their new Christian social fields where those from their respective British Gujarati social fields did not have the strength of agency. Hence, the British Evangelical Church becomes a place where capital is within their reach through their own sense of agency. The identification of their agency by others in British Evangelical Christian social fields was such that they believed themselves to be able to escape the structural constraints of the authority of their British Gujarati social fields.

Rani transitioned into her new religious practices with the same fervour as she had with her Hindu practices. This is evidenced in the oldest daughter Kanta's recollection of the early years before her father's conversion:

> Um, but also I think for many years, my mom, because she was so frightened and she knew that she was the only Christian, she, she probably went harder on us as children to make us Christian or bring us up as Christians because she didn't have the support of my dad until later when he became a Christian.
> So she, it was very, she became quite regimental in how we had to study the Bible to the point where it was like, you know, she would make us sit for hours. My mom, I laugh about it now, but like if we twitched or made a noise or whatever, she would start the whole reading again. (Kanta/inv/1)

All three of the children and Mohan share similar stories of Rani's deep level of dedication. Rani, like her husband Mohan, experienced times of re-adjustment regarding interactions with cultural capital within the British Gujarati family. In the early years, the binary of belonging was a relief to Rani in many ways in that she could cope with the isolation and rejection she experienced in the patrilocal family. Like Sunita Darji, by extracting herself from the previous religious social field, there was access to a form of capital and other agents that relied on alternate doxa through the sense of community amongst other Christians. Furthermore, both Sunita and Rani were released from the restriction of their voice by the dominance of the patrilocal family.

The binary of the church and patrilocal family social fields had immediate value to Rani as she felt no longer subject to her patrilocal family's religio-cultural authoritative

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framework. Part of the purpose of habitus is to maintain doxa. Habitus in this sense, through its repetitive nature creates a sense of certainty of doxa. The strategies to penetrate the social fields are incremental. The life event of marriage transferred Rani Darshan to her patrilocal family, and conversion transferred her religious self-identity. However, in order to increase agency and access capitals, the habitus, though repetitive, has the tendency to respond to ever so slight micro-changes.

Mohan Darshan's abrupt individual choice to change behaviour in the way he attended the religious gathering at his relative's home seemed symbolically violent from both the host's and the guest's standpoint. Both assumed their own authoritative framework to be able to uphold the way they chose to behave in relation to each other. The misunderstanding of the symbols of religious belonging and personal choice affect how individuals in social fields interpret the changes in self-identity.

Rani and Mohan Darshan's daughter Bhanu recalls the difficulty of religious identification based on personal action when her mother wrote "Jesus Loves You" on her hockey stick. This resulted in Bhanu and Kanta Darshan being bullied by other South Asian children at the school. A written religious statement is an unfamiliar expression of British Gujarati habitus. Rani had no personal experience of conventional British Evangelical Christian religio-cultural practices outside the church building, or within the indigenous British school social field. How others identify individual agency in the change of religious identity challenges the expectations of behaviour within overlapping social fields.

Kanta and Bhanu Darshan have many positive personal symbolic interactions with their Convert identity individually, through their parents and the British Evangelical Christians. However, their brother Anand Darshan's interaction with Christianity led to his choice of rejection of his family's collective religious identity. Anand's Christian religious beliefs were passed down from his parents. He recollects from his final years at secondary school, "I was excelling in science and didn't need God in the middle" (AnandD/inv/1). Education as institutional cultural capital is addressed by Bourdieu:

> With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time. (Bourdieu 1986:21)

Anand Darshan chose to self-identify as an atheist while at university. Education as institutional capital gave him the 'cultural competence' with high symbolic and economic

value in both British Gujarati and the broader British culture. Through education, Anand believes he had access to what Bourdieu refers to as, "legally guaranteed values" (Bourdieu 1986:21). With his British cultural education, Anand identified with the broader British culture. He stated that his confidence in his intellectual ability outgrew his use for Christianity or in religion of any kind (AnandD/inv/1). His choice was to interact with the British cultural capital beyond what he believed as the characterisation of British Evangelical idea of the intracultural doxa. His access to agency as a second generation convert and 2nd generation diaspora has given him a sense of what Bourdieu refers to as "relative autonomy vis-á-vis its bearer and vis-á-vis the cultural capital" (1986:21). Atheism has its own cultural capital within the indigenous British social fields.

The impact of the changes in his social fields is apparent as Anand recollects his memory of leaving Kenya and going to school in Britain. He states, "We were the ones without a home. We were not exactly white to be a Christian" (AnandD/inv/1). He associated ethnicity with Christianity. Anand made the connection between the ideas of home, Christianity and white. His atheism, he argues, is due to what he believes is his interaction with Evangelical Christianity. "You have to swallow what you are told. If you question, you are not doing it right…accept word for word" (AnandD/inv/1). The leadership at the London Church, including Anand's parents continue to adapt British Gujarati Christian practice to British Gujarati culture, but have a specific Evangelical theology that perhaps did not deliver a strong enough intellectual context for Anand Darshan. I asked him if there were any Christian scientists who were academics in his education:

> There were two or three science teachers who were Christians, but they were very tactful about who they told and what they would say. Now that we can actually theoretically and experimentally prove how certain things work and you don't need the God thing in the middle, if you can explain a lot of the world. (AnandD/inv/1)

It appears that Anand's choice to convert to atheism may have been influenced by symbolic interaction with a particular Evangelical method of interpretation of Biblical text. He appears to apply his perceptions of the limitations of Evangelical theology as a comparison to academic methods of interpreting educational texts. Anand spoke of his access to science through his secondary and tertiary education. Through institutional education as capital, he had access to multiple social fields in the broader British culture, where religious self-identity or identification had less value amongst the Converts and British Evangelical Christians. His agency in these fields appear to provide a more

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acceptable habitus as structuring structures give him defined areas of agency and access to capitals based on his individual choices.

What appears evident is that Anand's agency in the social field of the British Evangelical church gave him contact with capital, but insufficient personal habitus to use his agency and capital to interact with the variations of doxa. He limited British Evangelical Christianity to a small range of experiences with his immediate family, yet broadly accepted any criticism of Christianity without hesitation at university based upon texts in other subject areas. Recognising personal abilities to interrelate in social fields with symbols using institutional capitals as tactics or strategies contributes to flexibility that influences habitus and doxa. An example of the effect of personal decision-making on habitus and doxa will be discussed in the following two sections.

6.4.3 Priti and Prakash Bhakt and Family

The Bhakt family has strong pre-conversion and post-conversion ties with their British Gujarati family, community, and the London Church. Priti and her family came to Britain from Kenya when Priti was eight years old. Her husband Prakash's family also came from Kenya, but he was born in Britain. Both of them were the first generation to have access to instruction on British Gujarati religious beliefs through Hindu cultural education sessions at a London *mandir* where they met, married, and continued their religio-cultural practices. Both have attained Ph.D. degrees, successful careers and are actively involved at the London Church, and have a wide range of high institutional and cultural capitals. They come from large multi-generational extended family networks. Their interaction with British Evangelical Christians began when Prakash as a 2nd generation diaspora teenager attended a local youth group at the Gospel Hall where the London Church now gathers.

This section shows how the Bhakt family adapt and influence authority by working through the interstices to connect their 'spaces and strategies' in their social fields by using their own 'time and tactics' (De Certeau 1984:xix). The Bhakt family's agency and cultural capital overlapped in both British Evangelical Christian and British Gujarati arenas. The Bhakts maintain close relationships with their family and fulfil religio-cultural obligations within their networks. Priti is very active in the London Church social media chat groups. Some of the Bhakt extended family live in the neighbourhood surrounding the London Church. As a result, some Converts from the London Church have befriended them, thus drawing a greater overlap of social fields.

The balance of relationships is part of working with different levels of agency. The areas of overlap from one social field to another enabled the flexibility of practice within the two structural frameworks of British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christianity. These have contributed to occasions of shared religio-cultural interactions between the two social fields. The British Gujarati and the British Evangelical Church had doxa that required employing their different tactics in and around each other's places of authority.

Priti and Prakash had been baptised after their conversions as adults. After the birth of their second child, they planned to have a baby dedication on her first birthday, assuming their children would take baptism as adults. Michael Viner[11] suggested having both of the girls baptised (FN/BAP/txt). Lina Bhakt, the eight year-old daughter would be baptised by immersion, while the infant child would be sprinkled with water.[12]

In their stated efforts as leaders of the London Church and to be culturally and linguistically British Gujarati focused, Michael called the event *pani sanskar* (FN/BAP).[13] The London Church prefers the term 'Jesus follower' rather than 'Christian' in order to avoid British Gujarati negative characterisation of Christian conversion. Michael mentioned his hope that the Bhakt family would use the event to show the continued influence of their heritage in their Christian self-identity (FN/BAP). This might encourage the identification of Christians by British Gujarati apart from their traditionally held historical characterisation of the white people's religion. He was hoping that including British Gujarati artefacts into their church would be a tactic to register positive symbolic interactions with Christianity.

The invitation Priti created for the baptism had a professional portrait of the girls in white lace dresses. The presentation was noted by Michael and Raksha as being "very American" (FN/BAP). This was not unusual considering the Bhakts are very close friends with the American missionaries. At the event, the girls were dressed in white, which in the British Gujarati culture is not usually the colour of choice for celebration, but in the church represents purity.

Seventy British Gujarati family and friends of the Bhakt family attended the *pani sanskar*. This was an increase of two hundred percent from the usual Sunday gathering at the London Church. Priti and Prakash also used the occasion to make a public declaration before all those present. They stated as a family, while they would always remain close

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[11] Pseudonym.

[12] See the British Evangelical Church Habitus section in Chapter 1 for further details on baptism.

[13] *Pani sanskar* in the BGLC1 context means water purification.

to British Gujarati family and community, they had chosen their religious identity and wanted to be known by all those present as followers of Jesus only.

The Bhakts' interaction within the church could be compared to the way de Certeau discusses the representation of education by teachers or institutional religion by preachers. De Certeau asserts that an idea that is taught by those in authority as key to advancement does not necessarily reveal how those who are taught use the information. He offers the example of Spanish colonisers introducing a system to indigenous people, who altered its use to suit them. By doing so, they satisfied their authority both as community and under the structural control of the colonisers. The Bhakts thereby satisfied both the British Evangelical authority of baptism and themselves as the subjects of the authority within the Christian and their family's social fields. The baptism ritual of Christian belonging was adapted by what Whitehouse (2014:2) refers to as a diversity of behaviour that spans evolving patterns of culture, thus structurally locating the Bhakt family's decision of transcultural Christian identification amongst their British Gujarati family.

The user's method of utilising the knowledge must be analysed before those that dispense the knowledge can measure the appropriateness of application (de Certeau 1984:xiii). The Bhakt family with high social and cultural capitals and agencies amongst the British Gujarati and the London Church utilised personal expressions of religio-cultural identity within the church and British Gujarati fields to reorganize their agency and authority. Michael Viner as representative of church authority and as the dispenser of the knowledge was better able to direct the appropriate use of the baptism service in the British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christians' cultural contexts.

The baptism event as a tactic was dependent on the appropriate time and opportunity. De Certeau refers to this 'tactic' (technique) as a 'mutation' (modification), like the temporary occupation of a rental apartment. It temporarily modifies the space as a place of belonging. The Bhakts' technique at the London Church can be seen as it, 'transforms another person's property into a space borrowed by a transient' (de Certeau 1984:xxi). The rental apartment is the 'property' that symbolises some of the fixed aspects of British Gujarati and British Evangelical Church authoritative frameworks at the London Church.

Priti and Prakash reaffirmed their changing family's religious identity in Lina Bhakt's carefully crafted speech on why she had chosen to be baptised[14] (FN/BAP). By

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[14] See Appendix D.

distinguishing the adapted boundaries of the nuclear Bhakt family identity as Christian, they simultaneously maintained identification by and with their broader extended family as British Gujarati. The combination of relational ties between their family and the broader Christian family of the London Church meant that habitus was flexible and enabled sufficient use of agency to connect to the social capital. The doxa was adjusted as members of both social fields had overlapped in their interactions as they acknowledged, accepted and affirmed the Bhakt family. Through attending the memorable occasion, all participated in an adjustment to doxa and simultaneously increased group social capitals.

Lina's speech at the baptism fulfilled the British Evangelical Christian requirement of making a personal faith statement at baptism. In addition, in British Gujarati domestic or temple Hinduism, rituals are performed most often without explanation. While on the one hand the mysticism of rituals is appreciated by British Gujarati, the danger of grey areas of characterisation based upon historical misunderstanding of baptism were avoided. Some of the Bhakt extended family members believed baptism was a choice to physically separate from the family based upon the idea of baptism as the death of the past life.[15] The meaning of baptism was explained not only by the minister, Priti and Prakash but also by Lina using simple language, but clearly focusing on her individual choice of religious self-identity:

> Because Jesus asks that if anyone believes in him and trusts in him to be their Saviour, then they must get baptised in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I know there is nothing magical about the water in this ceremony. The real magic is that Jesus chose me and I chose him. (Excerpt from speech by Lina Bhakt)[16]

The final two sentences create an overlap and address the blurry edges that British Gujarati and Converts must engage with. Lina states, "I know there is nothing magical about the water," thereby differentiating baptism from pilgrimages to holy rivers by Hindus. The closing sentence also gives a sense of *karma* and *dharma* as a decision that was under the direction of God. This is an overlapping of doxa by presenting the British Gujarati self to Converts and the British Gujarati Christian self to the British Gujarati. At the same time, the British Gujarati acceptance of the stated Christian identity by Priti and

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[15] See the section on British Evangelical Christian Habitus in Chapter 1.

[16] Priti Bhakt provided a copy of Lina's speech via email. Full text available in Appendix D.

Prakash and their daughter added to some form of belonging for those who had previously attended Prakash's baptism and the modified baby shower.

The British Gujarati used their practice of flexibility of interwoven doxa and agency rather than the structured authority of defined religious belonging. While individuals within the Bhakt family did not readily accept the conversion of Priti and Prakash, (Priti/inv/1; Prakash/inv/1) in the collective atmosphere where both social fields overlapped by their relationship, adaptability required less effort. This idea of the broadening of practices relates to the Gujaratiness of multiplicity of influences.

In essence, the transcultural design of the Bhakt family's event resonates with multiple issues of Bourdieu's theories of social fields, habitus, capitals and agency and de Certeau's theory of 'space' and 'place'. Both Bourdieu and de Certeau have theories on the workings of society. They are both concerned with authority structures and who maintains control and how those who have less control might influence society for their own benefit. Even the tiniest change within a society has the possibility of being an example to others in society. This reveals opportunities for flexibility to push into or against authoritative practices. The sometimes-subtle changes are part of the unmuting of the marginalised.

Priti Bhakt as the original convert in her nuclear family used her understanding of doxa in the social fields of her British Gujarati family and British Evangelical Christianity. Along with her husband, as representing the dominant gender and her daughters as the future generation, they created modifications to the social fields. They used the dominant group rules from each field, stretching the boundaries by creating a new 'language' in terms of observable, repeatable and accessible, unmuted self-identity. Even though the family of four were in the minority (shown in the illustration below) they successfully unmuted their self-identity and identification in this very small area of overlap.
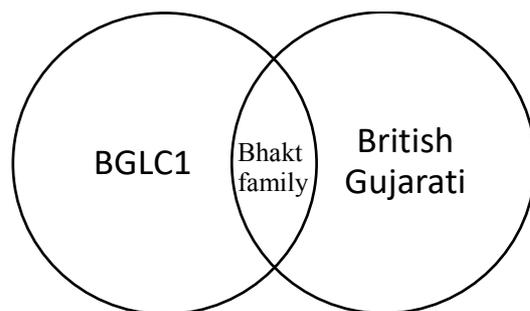
Figure 6.1

Through social ties, practices are constantly renegotiated and reinforced as each situation has slight variations that have a micro-impact on habitus, thus contributing to relationship networks rather than a detachment from religio-cultural social fields based upon replacement of religious identity. In May 2019, three months after the baptism, an elder of the Bhakt extended family visited Michael Viner (the minister who had performed the baptism) at his home. The elder invited Michael to be part of his daughter's wedding at the public *mandir*. Michael told me the elder had said, "Now that Christianity is a part of the family, it would be appropriate to be a part" (Michael/FN/BAP). As a recognition of the presence of Christianity in the broader Bhakt family network, Michael's presence provides an acknowledgement of extending relational networks.
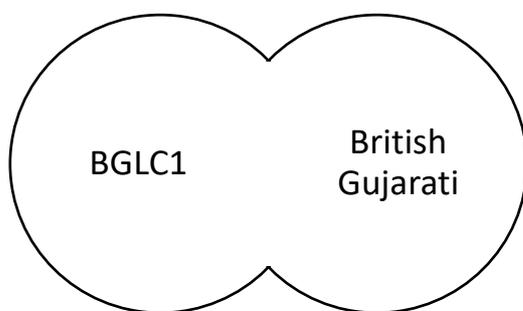
Figure 6.2

Through the series of events with the Bhakt family, the London Church religio-cultural capital and doxa was communicated. As the above illustration shows, the Bhakt family's unmuting has become part of the doxa that connects both social fields and is not dependent on the presence of the Bhakt family for the unmuting process to continue in the respective arenas.

The website states, "London Church is a multicultural group who follow Prabhu Isu (Jesus) while embracing British Asian culture. The living Lord Jesus did not form Western religion." The London Church uses British Gujarati language and artefacts to create capital and reinforce doxa. Their doxa reinforces the idea of 'voice' in terms of conveying Evangelical Christianity to and from marginalised Converts beyond the ability to use their Gujarati language as capital. Other symbolic cultural capital is introduced into the setting by the inclusion of the Converts' self-determined cultural expressions, such as using traditional call and repeat forms of singing.

The experiences of the Bhakt family influence higher agency in the hierarchy of both social fields. Furthermore, through the interaction of the London Church leaders with the broader British Evangelical churches, they have contributed to adapting religio-cultural capital. However, according to my research, their experience of bringing together the social fields of British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christians is rare. The Converts are few in number and most of them have adapted to British Evangelical Churches and separated from their previous culture connections almost entirely.

Most Converts begin and remain within white majority churches, even though there may be a multi-ethnic presence, their religio-cultural articulation is curated within a British Evangelical Christian field of reference. In this respect, the everyday expressions may be unheard and invisible. The following section demonstrates how the position and representation of self-identity and identification at the margins are utilised by Converts.

6.5 Individual Choices

In this section, the focus is upon a variety of incidents and recollections that are less associated with large life events, but have a meaningful impact upon the personal challenges of conversion. This will help capture and analyse individual experiences of symbolic interactions that have changed over time. As a British Gujarati Christian engaging in researching the Converts, there is an autoethnographic aspect of my research that has been detailed in Chapter 3. Throughout my data collection, my participation within the field became part of my research data. During the early days of my fieldwork, I became aware of moments when my participation became an integral part of my research. A significant moment was when I heard and saw the Gujarati text of 'The Lord's Prayer' in a church (Usha/FN/BGLC1).

The expression of British Gujarati Christianity for Converts is within the British Evangelical Church. While as Converts we have agency and capitals within the Church, the disconnect from British Gujarati habitus is perhaps most noticeable in terms of language and culture. The multiple identities of Converts while embracing the conversion identity of a new life neglects the acknowledgement of the British Gujarati self and social fields, creating unnecessary restrictive boundaries.

Hearing the Gujarati word '*rotli*' rather than *roti* (the Hindi or Punjabi word) or 'bread' in the sentence, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' had a profound effect of vivid involuntary memory of my British Gujarati self. I had been repeating this prayer in English from my first days at primary school as I was learning to speak English. Within

my self-identity as a British Gujarati at the time, the use of the English prayer was by imitation due to limited understanding and thus similar to the daily *puja* practices with my mother. Since my conversion I had limited my religio-cultural expression to English, thus muting my sense of being British Gujarati.

I recognised that like so many of the converts I had interviewed, British Gujarati Christian 'Gujaratiness' was closely attached to our perception of religious identification by others. Our knowledge and expression of the converted identity was divorced from our knowledge and expression of British Gujaratiness, in part by natural erosion due to change in habitus, but also perhaps impacted by separating the self-identity into a pre-conversion and post-conversion self. I recognised my own Christianisation was part of what Hefner refers as 'religious reformulation [that] is associated with the making of the modern world' While I possessed knowledge of Evangelical Christianity as 'different cultural shadings in local settings' (1993:5), I had muted my personal transcultural expressions.

Evidence of Converts' unmuting occurred with those whom I shared living spaces and life during my fieldwork. We all used English until we gradually began code mixing with English and then transitioned to Gujarati.[17] Prior to the period of fieldwork, not hearing, writing, and speaking our language had impacted our habitus and eroded our Gujarati identity as our connections with British Gujarati through shared experiences had diminished. Stuart Hall (1989) addresses the restraint of the vocalisation of diasporic cultural identity as resulting in an ongoing issue of self-articulation. The Converts' voice is naturally represented in English as part of the collective by the British Evangelical Church. Inadvertently the English words used in the church became part of a selection of specialised terminology that isolate English speaking British Gujarati religious expression as completely disconnected and irrelevant to British Evangelical Christian religious expression.

West and Turner argue that language serves the dominant group, thus those who have to learn the language use it to the best of their ability (2017:505). The British Gujarati Christian's fluency with English predates their conversion; however, it does not predate their religious habitus in the home. For example, as a result of conversion, the household *mandir* and the *murti* become foreign gods and idols; two things that are strongly opposed in British Evangelical church doxa. However, upon conversion, the

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[17] Code mixing refers to mixing of more than one language in a conversation.

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Converts do not have Gujarati words to discuss their new interpretation of their family's household religio-cultural practices.

The use of the English language became dominant in the British Gujarati diaspora. However, if conversion is a diaspora of religious beliefs, then by including Gujarati as a language of origin creates possibilities of retaining cultural practices that could stimulate evolution of Converts' expression in the church and in British Gujarati social fields. The use of only English in creating a Convert's self-identity is common amongst bilingual Converts. Apart from the former Swaminarayan priest, all the Converts expressed their inability to explain their new religious identity in Gujarati. The sense of feeling unmuted upon hearing the Gujarati words I associate with my British Gujarati self, used within the context of my convert self, changed the way I approached my lived practices. Seeing the Gujarati text displayed with modern technology and the familiarity of visual artefacts sanctioned the representation for Converts beyond the location of the London Church.

In reference to de Certeau's points on the written text, Hilga Wild notes, "It [writing] draws on and continues the representations whereby a society presents itself to itself" (Wild 2012:5). As the London Church represents its British Gujarati Christian doxa to itself, small changes in position and space to self-represent grow to enable a unique representation of the Converts. De Certeau's concept of the link between the written and society might then be taken further. Representation through interpretation influences actions, speech and additional writing. All of these are dependent on an individual's understanding, interpretation, emphasis and decision-making.

Michael Viner from the London Church and Raksha approached me to help host a *yadgiri* as a memorial service to honour the first anniversary of my father's death and others in the community who had passed away in the previous year. At the event, I displayed a picture of my parents with a small *thali*[18] upon which flower petals and tea lights/*diva* were placed. I was unaware at the time that my influence within the group as a researcher and British Gujarati Christian gave me unique agency in both social fields as this was the first event of its kind. My use of artefacts is a significant imitation of British Gujarati religious ritual. This became significant in establishing another authority of practice two years later when at Rani Darshan's mother's funeral.

The family of the deceased chose to use the London Church as a place to gather with the broader community after the traditional cremation. Rani arrived at the London

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[18] *Thali* is a small circular stainless steel tray that can be used for serving food. Amongst the dinner plates are common. The *thali* is used mostly for *puja*.

Church with a large framed picture of her mother and a small box of *mithai*[19] she wanted to place on a table on the raised platform with a *divo*. Her dilemma was clear from our interview sessions. Since her conversion, she had ceased many of her religio-cultural practices as she stated, 'Because it's all very demonic' (Rani/FN/R). While she would attend some family events in recent years, her aversion to what she perceived as Hindu artefacts was relatively strict.

On this occasion, Rani wanted to place the photo on a table with a *divo* upon the raised platform; the place usually reserved for the ordained church minister. The interpretation of the photo as a religious icon connects to the pictures of deceased relatives that may be placed alongside icons of Hindu gods in a *mandir* at home

Recalling my role in the previous *yadgiri* for my deceased father, Rani approached me to ask if honouring the memory of her mother by displaying the photograph in the traditional way would be idolatrous and breaking the second of the Ten Commandments (Rani/FN/F). Her previously held strong binary positions about involvement with religio-cultural artefacts and events had left her extended family feeling dishonoured by her change in behaviour post-conversion (MohanD/inv/1; BhanuD/inv/1).

On this occasion, Rani made a decision to honour her mother's memory and share the traditional grieving process with her extended family based upon her interpretation of my use of the photo of my parents at the *yadgiri*. Rani said she did not have a biblical text for her action, but wanted her family to be able to respect her mother properly (RaniD/FN/F). She used her judgement based upon her previous engagement of collective mourning at the *yadgiri* (FN/F). Rani previously believed the display of a photo of a deceased relative was idolatry. She chose to reinterpret her religio-cultural position and unmute through a personal choice that caused a significant alteration of her perception thus blur a certain binary between British Gujarati and convert practices. Additionally, the type of Evangelical Christianity that the Converts experienced may at times inadvertently rely on using select portions of texts to back up practices that have been established as part of British Evangelical Christian habitus. This bears some similarity to British Gujarati habitus of imitation of elders' practices of domestic Hinduism without necessarily having a clear connection to defined temple-based Hinduism.

Part of Rani's conversion process was through her supernatural experience where she was aware of an evil presence and then heard a voice directing her to the Bible. She began reading the Bible and attending the Evangelical church where the meaning was

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[19] *Mithai* is the Gujarati word for sweets.

explained (RaniD/inv/2). Rani and Mohan Darshan's choice of practices are based on their interpretation of Evangelical theology as explained in the introductory chapter. Their application of British Evangelical Christian habitus has changed as they have sought to connect with their family and community.

The recognition of the cultural limitations for the Convert in the British Evangelical Church contributed to the creation of the London Church. The use of the Gujarati language and text was planned with the involvement of several leaders, as was my use of the artefacts at the *yadgiri*. Rani's decision was more individual but relied on the support of a fellow Convert in 'our place' at an opportune moment. This is about a choice based on giving voice through personal actions. My grief at the *yadgiri* and Rani's grief with her British Gujarati family had shared moments that overlapped but with different emphases. In a sense, the *yadgiri* for my father unmuted my grief but also contributed to Rani's unmuting at her mother's funeral.

Wild quotes de Certeau on the point of historiography as it, "investigates the practice of writing as the means of producing a reality and establishing itself as its authoritative ground" (2012:5). In addition to using Gujarati music forms and language, a further step was the use of Gujarati language, which especially in the written form was instrumental in unmuting a religio-cultural British Gujarati Christian self. This broadens the realm of possibilities of actions by interpretive personal expression within the authoritative framework thus reducing the internal conflict of double consciousness that restrains the binary of identity.

Expressing the British Gujarati Christian self can occur within a specific safe social field surrounded by other converts and British Evangelical Christians. As a researcher, after my period of deeply embedded ethnographic fieldwork, I found myself wanting to remain connected to my British Gujarati identity after I left the field. I achieved this by continuing the practice of wearing more traditional South Asian attire even while away from the research community. (My previous practice was to limit my South Asian attire to home or for South Asian activities).

On one occasion, I was in conversation with a female (white) British Evangelical leader who had spent many years in India. The conversation moved to the British Gujarati Christian's presence in the church and the wearing of a *sari*. She remarked, "Of course a *sari* should not really be worn in church, because it is so deliberately sensual." Even though I was in a British Evangelical location and not wearing a sari at the time the remark was made, the expression of my British Gujarati self was subjected to the symbolic

interaction of my perception of a dominant indigenous voice. My double consciousness as a British Christian and a British Gujarati in both social fields was wavering between avoiding wearing traditional Indian clothes at British Evangelical locations, and representing myself as a British Gujarati Christian amongst British Evangelical Christians.

While this incident is one clearly documented personal recollection of what is referred to in muted group theory as 'trivialising', many occasions of gentle mockery and tactless remarks in regards, to language, dress and culture have been part of the racialised experience of Converts. As a person actively involved in the British Evangelical Church, functioning in multiple social fields, I believe my overlapping capitals offers me the agency to analyse the statement regarding the *sari*. The echo of the remark from a person of high agency within the British Evangelical social fields, reveals that British Gujarati Christian cultural identity functions in the margins of those fields. There is an inadvertent yet subtle negative discriminatory perspective that is located within the limitations of the British Evangelical Christian religio-cultural context.

The application of Stuart Hall's position and representation can thus be employed; a specific indigenous British Evangelical Christian voice, while certainly diminishing over time, is historically positioned above British Gujarati cultural expression. Symbolic interaction with religio-cultural gestures may blur the differences between indigenous British Evangelicals and British Gujarati or other ethnically different Converts dependent upon the social field, agency and capitals at stake. I noted an occasion when I invited South Asian Christian (non-Gujarati) background friends to the London Church.[20] In my greeting to Raksha Gupta's mother, I performed a gesture of respect by touching her feet as a symbol of honouring her as one of my parents' generation during the period of New Year celebrations and signifying the importance of our relationship.[21]

My friends, Elizabeth and Julie, and Raksha Gupta were upset by my display. They explained that they interpreted the gesture as physical act of bowing down and touching the feet to be equivalent to bowing to worship a human as a god. (FN/Y). Elizabeth was a minority Christian in India recalling the pressure to bow down to Hindu leaders. Julie was a 2nd generation Convert and 2nd generation migrant living in North America.

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[20] Raksha is a first generation Convert. Elizabeth is of Indian Christian background from multiple generations from India. Julie is a second generation convert and second generation multiple migrant to Canada from the Caribbean.

[21] "The elders have obviously lived longer than you and have thus gathered a lot of wisdom and experience. They are in a higher spiritual plane than the younger ones who touch their feet." www.hindutsav.com/why-hindu-touch-the-feet-of-their-elders/ [accessed 2021-06-30]

Raksha believed her parents forced her to honour them as gods. All three believed it was a Hindu gesture that might give the impression to the British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian and thus encourage Hindu pluralism. The challenge is the individual position and representation of the multiple identities in multiple social fields and the choice of when and how to engage with capitals.

To stretch the flexibility of the boundaries by personal decision making, tests the limits of agency, hence the decision to use my agency amongst my South Asian peers had some impact on personal relational capital. My taking a physical position that implies lower status and accepting the interpretation of the act of bowing to a person as idolatry had a negative impact on all three of my friends. Prior to my research I would have had the same response. On this occasion the autoethnographic aspect of my research changed the way I chose to unmute Gujarati familial piety. Even though all three of the women came from a variety of generations, traditions, and locations of Indian Evangelical Christian practice, it appears I had stretched the boundary too far for them. At the time, I chose to understand their attitude as self-Orientalism.

By accepting the interpretation defined within South Asian Christian expression, traditional representation of respect for the elders in the Indian tradition is thus symbolically muted. Once again this is part of theological interpretation that represents a particular strand of British Evangelical Christian habitus detailed in the introductory chapter, but has overlaps amongst those of South Asian heritage that function in the multiplicity of English-speaking cultural traditions alongside their varied Indian traditions.

The wearing of a *sari* and specific ways of giving food to friends and neighbours, as well as the way communal meals are shared are part of the religio-cultural communication of British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian subordinate groups. The comment made about the sensual nature of the *sari* came from an indigenous British Christian, whom I chose to interact with as holding a position with more authoritative representation than my South Asian peers as I viewed her through her agency as my senior in age and in her leadership role at the institution.

The following section will show the different displays of personal authority in religio-cultural festivals/celebrations.

6.6 Background of British Gujarati and Converts' Interpretation of *Rakshabandan* and Diwali

In these sections, I will analyse the phenomenon of the celebrations of the religio-cultural festivals of *Rakshabandan* and Diwali. Of the main annually recognised occasions amongst the Gujarati diaspora in the West, these are two of the most commonly celebrated amongst the family and broader British Gujarati community. The section will look at the British Gujarati's contextualisation of *Rakshabandan* compared to the British Evangelical Church's contextualisation of Diwali.

The successes and failures of the direction of the practises lie within the variety of possibilities of institutional influence by those that practise rather than those who teach as pointed out by de Certeau (1984:xiii). The methods of observance have been hybridised through evolving practices and adapted by the British Gujarati. Amongst the participants in the *Rakshabandan* questionnaire, the interviews and observations, that included British Gujarati elders or *maraj*[22] in the *mandir*, there was no consensus on the origins of *Rakshabandan*. However, individual actions have personal symbolic relevance.

The questionnaire on *Rakshabandan* included three questions on personal understanding of *Rakshabandan* and three questions on personal understanding of Christmas.[23] Throughout all the data gathered including interviews and field notes, all participants had common knowledge of Christmas as a Christian holiday. Only two British Gujarati individuals mentioned Father Christmas or Saint Nicholas without mentioning Jesus as the central figure. Additionally, the origin of Diwali was discussed in every interview and during field visits to show that *Rakshabandan*, Christmas and Diwali are all familiar religio-cultural occasions to all British Gujarati and British Gujarati Christian converts.

The consensus on Diwali was to celebrate with food, family, new clothes, gifts, fireworks, and light *diva* over a period of a few days. Diwali was preceded by several nights of *garba*.[24] All participants acknowledged Diwali as 'the festival of light' and 'our version of Christmas.' The British Gujarati did not state any clear knowledge of the religious background of Diwali. Most of the British Gujarati Christian knowledge of any religious background of Diwali was post-conversion. This means that the lens of the

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[22] Priest.

[23] See Appendices J and K for further details.

[24] Traditional Gujarati dance.

conversion identity sought to define the event. This allows for the possibility of creating new meanings through personal interpretation leading to flexibility of practice rather than the defined knowledge of religious beliefs.

6.6.1 *Rakshabandan*

The festival of *Rakshabandan*[25] is the recognition of the practical and symbolic nature of the brother-sister bond from childhood through adulthood. By tying the *rakhi*[26] on the brother's wrist, the sister wishes him continued protection from harm and success in life. The recipient responds by giving gifts of money or a sari to the sisters as a symbol of the continuity of connection, provision, and protection within the natal home. The purpose of *Rakshabandan* is to acknowledge the extension of the family and is not limited to blood relatives but may include people accepted as family.

While the relationships in the natal home and voluntary kin relationships seem contradictory, it is the ability of the women to modify relationships with the opposite sex within a culture where male female connections traditionally fall into two definitions as either sexual or familial. This suggests that *Rakshabandan* acknowledges the unavoidable change of the family yet simultaneously creating a way to broaden the family networks.

Modern uses of *Rakshabandan* in schools in India have been used to create ties between Hindu and Muslim students. It has also been adopted and adapted by politicians and community leaders (Joshy & Seethi 2015:112). Practices adapt to fit the diasporic nature not only of the people but the festival as a phenomenon itself. *Rakshabandan* is the acknowledgement of scattering from the natal home and the gathering in the patrilocal home, but also gives sense of the dispersion of authority, in that the *vaow* at the lowest level of hierarchy in the patrilocal home, will have children and eventually become the matriarch and hold the highest level of authority. It also reflects the ongoing understanding of the *samsara*[27] as lifecycles.

In a sense, the function of *Rakshabandan* can be perceived as a tactic within the overall structure of the British Gujarati religio-cultural social field. It is a built-in opportunity that by its nature provides a relationship bridge that may be utilised to draw marginal people and practices from the periphery by a voluntary act of inclusion.

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[25] See the BG Habitus section in Chapter 1 for further details on *Rakshabandan*.

[26] *Rakhi* is the cord or bracelet tied on the wrist of the brother (cousin brother or male voluntary kin) during Rakshabandan.

[27] *Samsara* is the cycle of life and death to which the material world is bound.

Rakshabandan may then be perceived as realising an unmuting of relationship bond, created through the woman's position.

By applying muted group theory from its original feminist application, the Gujarati women though marginalised, can be seen to use their power by honouring their voluntary kin and thus to some degree influence relationship networks. The unmuting may then be two-fold. Firstly, it gives the women the choice to create a new filial bond with an unspoken iteration of protection and provision. Secondly, it broadens the influence of the individual men and women and their agency.

The act of tying the *rakhi* could draw individuals towards the centre of social fields by open acknowledgement of interconnected agency creating relational capital. *Rakshabandan* creates collective and individual ability to negotiate capitals and broadens the field. Symbolic interaction with *Rakshabandan* is adaptable, hence it is a method by which agency becomes visibly apparent. A *rakhi* on the hand of a man suggests he has family or relational ties that support his access to capitals.

The interpretation of *Rakshabandan* may thus be viewed in line with de Certeau's argument that popular culture is influenced by 'enunciation.' Whilst primarily referring to the speech act, he also acknowledges that "a speaker appropriates his mother tongue in a particular situation of exchange" (1984:19). The appropriation of language can be extended to culture more widely as the use of the mother tongue becomes part of the procedure that puts into motion actions in the fields of language and social practices. While *Rakshabandan* would fall into what de Certeau refers to as 'corpus *peculiar*' (Italics by author) as something outside the popular culture, it identifies '*structural equilibria*' to identify an overlap.

Wild states, 'Certeau posited the possibility for everyone to clearly explore the interstitial spaces and design new paths' (2012:7). Hence the evolving *Rakshabandan* practice, like the written text and the speech act, allows the possibility of 'a society [that] presents itself to itself' (Wild 2012:5). The expression of *Rakshabandan* is the recurring spiral of relationships. With each recurrence of the celebration of *Rakshabandan* there is a broadening of networks of ties between individuals as they connect to their related social fields.

The questionnaire revealed that fifteen of the thirty British Gujarati Christian no longer observe *Rakshabandan* in any way. One convert stated that observance of the tradition was 'not part of my religion'.[28] The majority of participants did not have a firm

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[28] See Appendix K, Rakshabandan Questionnaire Results.

understanding of the background of the *Rakshabandan* tradition, in any social fields. The only British Gujarati who no longer observed *Rakshabandan* cited the reason that since his brother and sister converted to Christianity, they had ceased all involvement with all British Gujarati religio-cultural practices. This reveals the consequences of changes in practices upon the broader British Gujarati family and community that result in a separation of social fields.

Those Converts that observe *Rakshabandan* in any way were men who received *rakhi* from their sisters and cousin sisters, usually by post. Other than Priti Bhakt and Rina, the other British Gujarati Christian women did not participate. All the Converts that observed *Rakshabandan*, chose not to be involved with optional *puja*.[29] The male Converts who accepted the *rakhi* said they did not wear it, although some of them said they sent a gift of cash to their sisters and cousin sisters. Priti and Prakash have continued the traditions with their two daughters. Rina explained how she has taken part in *Rakshabandan* along with another South Asian Christian and a young American as part of their way of showing friendship to their male Christian friends. The young American, Craig was an intern at the London Church:

> Raj told me it was like a good thing to have a sisterly deep relationship. I mean they are sisters in Christ, but that giving a *rakhi* was a sign that there was no romantic interest. So, I guess it could be good, it could be bad, depending on how you want it to go. (FN/R)

Symbolically the young women practised their authority, by setting the boundary between the sexes as voluntary kin to each other as sisters and to Craig and Raj as their brothers. The sister to brother bond was formalised through the tying of the *rakhi*. This revealed agency in articulating a specific type of capital within a particular social field using the symbol of the *rakhi* as a boundary marker. The authority of the woman was exercised in making the choice to define the brother-sister relationship rather than the possibility of a misinterpreted romantic relationship. The practised authority in terms of creating a place for cultural expression intertwines individual connections and flexible approaches to symbolic interaction.

With this in mind, the following section demonstrates how the British Evangelical Church leaders chose to engage with the British Gujarati and the celebration of Diwali as an attempt to bridge the gap between the two social fields. This became evident at a contextual style British Evangelical Church Diwali event I attended in 2016.

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[29] See the British Gujarati habitus section in Chapter 1 for further details on *puja.*

6.6.2 Diwali Yeshu Satsang Celebration

In describing this event I must reiterate my position on this occasion was as a researcher primarily but also as a British Gujarati Christian.[30] Additionally, I had prior knowledge of all the groups involved and significant institutional capital in the form of my post-graduate degree in theology and my experience in Christian leadership as well as British Gujarati cultural and linguistic advantages. As a participant and observer, I now turn to data from my field notes:

> Three of the groups involved in executing the event were churches interested in conversion and discipleship of British Gujarati to Evangelical Christianity. Two groups were South Asian Christian groups that had an interest in converts' religio-cultural practises and the interaction between their communities, British Gujarati Christian, and the conversion of Hindus in Britain and India. The last group was from a Bible college that specialised in training Evangelical Christians for British Evangelical churches and foreign mission vocations.
>
> There are walk-through displays of Bible scenes using Indian artefacts, but nothing that could be connected to Hindu religious practices. There are a few Indian snacks and sweets and some soft drinks. There are no families or children here. This feels like a church service, but for kids. We are sitting on the floor. There are maybe eighty people. They all seem to know each other, all British Gujarati Christian and British Evangelical Christians. I met three people who were BG that came with British Gujarati Christian friends. The music is performed by indigenous British singing in Hindi with heavy English accents that rendered the lyrics completely incomprehensible. Using a projector, an icon of Jesus is displayed. The music leader is telling us to focus on this picture of a man. He has Western features in modern art form and is coloured in blue, yellow, green, and orange blocks. (FN/D)

At this event, the British Evangelical Christians operated with the understanding that British Gujarati Hinduism was expressed in English, especially by those who were beyond 1.5 generation diaspora. The presentations were mostly in English without the use of translators except during the Bible readings. The event was located within the British Evangelical church framework, but at the same time it revealed an intentional scattering of religio-cultural expression. The approach of drawing upon the Diwali season and the use of the term 'celebration' was a way to access British Gujarati religio-cultural social fields.

Just as in the Bhakt children's baptism at London Church, the event as a 'structure' was purposed by the leaders as a culturally appealing opportunity to make connection between Evangelical Christianity and British Gujarati religio-culture. However, those for

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[30] The methodology chapter details the research design and instrument and my acknowledgement of the bearing of my epistemological stance.

whom the event was organised chose how to engage in the way that was appropriate for them.

The contextual approach was an acknowledgement of the limitation of the British Evangelical Christians' comprehension. Beyond inviting friends, the event lacked real participation by the Converts. Rather than a celebration, the event felt like a simplified attempt to convert the British Gujarati to Evangelical Christianity. Those attendees from London Church appeared grateful for the British Evangelical Churches' effort at marking the Diwali event, but were not accompanied by family or friends in the same way as at the London Church events. They stated they wanted to support the event but the weekly gatherings at the London Church were further along in the process of broadening their cultural representation and flexibility (MohanD/FN/D; RaniD/FN/D; Jivan/FN/D).

Michael Viner recognised that this event was useful in showing the British Evangelical Christians desire for change and working alongside other churches and missions. He noted the involvement of Converts in planning and leading the London Church had taken him a number of years (Michael/FN/D). While individual actions may be adjusted through personal choices, the British Evangelical Church has specific habitus to hold doxa in place, especially in terms of interactions with those whom they wish to influence toward conversion.

6.6.3 Refashioning *Rakshabandan* and Diwali Celebrations

By comparison to the Diwali celebration, the *Rakshabandan* festival has no religio-cultural overlap in indigenous British or British Evangelical Christian culture. The adaptation is within the choice of the individual, family, and community with the stronger connection to domestic practices rather than temple Hinduism. The purpose of the festival can be adjusted and reinterpreted along the way. This is evidenced by the English style greeting cards and gifts.[31] While the connection between Diwali and Christianity was approached through the binary of the victory of light over darkness, *Rakshabandan*'s purpose is about nurturing and extending relational connections through a shared religio-cultural event.

In a British Gujarati setting, Diwali is celebrated in a similar spirit to Christmas. This is by extending relational connections through celebrations that are in the community rather than limited to the *mandir* or place of worship. The Diwali *Yeshu Satsang* celebration was an attempt at addressing the stereotype of British Christianity from what

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[31] See Appendix K, *Rakshabandan* Questionnaire Results.

was perceived as British Gujarati characterisation. The event appeared to validate symbolic interaction and the authorisation of British Gujarati symbols on broadly British Evangelical terms rather than individuals negotiating their identities.

The articulation of the Diwali *Yeshu Satsang* celebration was through Western Christian practices as 'universally authoritative' based on British Evangelical Church's social order. Beyond the appearance of the individual, the visual displays within the church 'space' fall within appropriate 'strategies'. The individual practises were thus being shaped within the British Evangelical Church habitus in line with their doxa.

The British Evangelical habitus that was employed by all those involved in organising the event did not appear to have considered the British Gujarati ability to interact with Evangelical Christianity. The presentations at the Diwali *Yeshua Satsang* celebration seemed aimed at pre-teenage children (Rani/FN/D; Mohan/FN/D; Michael/FN/D; Phillip/FN/D; Sheila/FN/D). There appeared little consideration that those British Gujarati attending an event in central London were all adult, well-educated, English speaking professionals. For the British Gujarati and Converts attempting to interact in represented social fields, they must use individual agency, and relational capital with leaders to work through habitus that may be based upon outdated characterisation of the British Gujarati diaspora.

It is the sharing of festivals that appears to blur the binary of double consciousness that is not limited to the 1st, 1.5 and 2nd generation diaspora experience, but also in terms of belonging in the patrilocal and the natal locations and networks. This encourages a sense of agency that challenges representation and cultural reproduction, thus creating opportunities for overlap in shared social fields. K.K.A. Venkatachari notes historical analysis reveals that Hindu rituals adapt to meet the needs of people in new contexts (1992:178). This conveys de Certeau's point by explaining that those who preach and teach social behaviour, such as educators and preachers may create knowledge. However, those that are taught do not necessarily use the knowledge according to the educator's intentions (de Certeau 1984:xiii).

It could then be argued that the structure of the Diwali celebration was caught in multiple areas where the overlapping habitus was recognised, respected and even acknowledged but still muted. Several structuring structures of authority were in play simultaneously. Firstly, the Evangelical church was recognised by all as the 'place' of the Christian. While evangelism is a core aspect of their doxa, their desire was to create an alternate habitus that would respect Hinduism by muting their own common approach to

proselytism. Secondly, Diwali is considered the most acclaimed Hindu festival that to a degree was unmuted in the church setting, as a way to welcome the British Gujarati. Thirdly, the British Gujarati as Hindus occupying a 'space' accepted an invitation to a muted celebration. Fourthly, the British Gujarati Christians who made personal decisions to convert from Hinduism to Christianity had the opportunity to unmute their pre and post conversion religio-cultural habitus. The 'rules of the game' though flexed to a degree were overwhelmed perhaps by the overall idea of respect to avoid conflict.

Analysing the purpose and execution of the two festivals from the practised authority of the British Gujarati and the practised authority of the Converts reveals a fundamental difference in their use of personal agency. While the Converts choose to self-identify as Christian, their cultural practices are challenged by the less visible flexibility of British Gujarati culture against an assumed understanding of British Evangelical Christian practices. However double consciousness as the feeling of being divided need not necessarily be an ongoing conflict of binary belonging. The majority of Converts are assimilated within the church and are uncertain of the idea of the multiplicity of their personal identities.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn from the individual personal practices of the British Gujarati Christian Converts and applied symbolic interactionism and muted group theory along with Bourdieu and de Certeau's theories of the confines of authority. As a rare group amongst the British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian, the Converts' daily lives are often characterised by peripheral interactions on the margins of the British Gujarati and the British Evangelical Christian social fields. Interactions within and between the dominant social fields through individual tactics (de Certeau) or strategies (Bourdieu) may eventually influence others thus create a new social field and areas of overlap with alternate habitus and doxa.

The difficulties of integrating social fields are characterised by Raksha's narrative which shows that identification by others and self-identity contribute to personal choices. The desire to occupy both social fields was met by gradually regaining the BG identity. Through returning to the use of her Gujarati name and reidentifying with her British Gujarati family and the Evangelical church, Raksha was able to represent her British Gujarati self, thus practised her authority and "become her own boss" (de Certeau 1974:275).

The adaptable nature of interpreting symbolic artefacts and practices bears witness to the widespread relational networks that validate practices of authority as interactions between social fields. Rani Darshan and individual family members had differing responses in how each member negotiated their beliefs of individual self-identity. Kanta and Bhanu respond to the overlap of social fields differently to their brother Anand. He responds to his parents' British Gujarati Christian identity and his acquired institutional capital of education by choosing to self-identify as an atheist.

The Bhakt family used a combination of symbolic interaction, position, and representation to unmute themselves and thus introduce new practice by their visual, textual, vocal and practical expression of their self-identity within their social fields. The issues of personal agency as opposed to institutional capital of the ownership of space during the baby shower were being negotiated as the event was occurring. Their personal actions resulted in the satisfaction of the Convert and British Evangelical Christian[32] social fields as networks of relationships broadened in a way that increased capitals in both social fields.

The individual interplay in social fields is further illustrated by applying Bourdieu's theory to *Rakshabandan.* As an affirmative practice of broadening relationship networks and recognition of roles in the social fields, individuals select relationships that overlap as 'family'. This reveals the agency of men and women in their respective homes by changes in habitus influencing doxa as they negotiate symbolic capital. De Certeau suggests there are innumerable other practices that remain minor yet provide peripheral support within institutions through selective 'enunciation' (de Certeau 1984:19). This is demonstrated by the way the Bhakt family continues *Rakshabandan* amongst their family and how Rina Divya adapted the custom to draw in white Christian and British Gujarati Christian male friends.

The question then becomes how the Converts as cultural newcomers might introduce other customs thus transforming practices in the church culture where they have chosen to belong. In this respect, the Diwali *Yeshu Satsang* Celebration attempted to bring forth new ways to create strategies into social fields that serve to broaden boundaries. It appears that the British Evangelical Christians use their agency within their authoritative framework to look for ways to push boundaries outward. Using a celebration from an alternate religious tradition, the Diwali event at the church was a tactic against its

structure. The tactic was used to alter the habitus from within. The technique aimed to generate a structure transition within the usual confines of practice to interact with broader cultural representations of Christianity to connect with the broader British Gujarati community. However, the British Evangelical Christian habitus while adjusted to including the converts could not avoid the structuring of British Evangelical Church practice and doxa.

This chapter has discussed the various ways that Converts interact with different aspects of their converted self-identity alongside British Evangelical Christian and British Gujarati religio-cultural symbols, including artefacts and gestures. As other Converts gradually or dramatically adjusted their practices and activity in the margins of the dominant groups, they began to inform new habitus, thus, paving the way to create broader social fields. This is evident in the way that some of the Converts chose to adapt *Rakshabandan* in the overlaps of their social field.

The effort made to create a Diwali celebration while unusual in execution reveals the attempts by the British Evangelical Church and Converts to deconstruct habitus. While endeavouring to encourage the BGC to contribute creatively to broaden practices, the event was limited to the position and representation of the British Gujarati Christian Converts through the British Evangelical Christian's outdated view of British Gujarati.

The following conclusion chapter will draw together the changes in family roles, the choices of locational belonging, and the challenges of personal practices that contribute to transcultural British Gujarati Christian expressions. The British Evangelical Christians and the British Gujarati Christian Converts' interactions over a period of time are more likely to bring gradual changes in personal actions that may then influence structural transitions in the British Evangelical Christian and the British Gujarati communities.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis by reconsidering the main aims of this study as an investigation into the means and extent to which British Gujarati become transcultural through Christian conversion. The first part of the thesis explored diaspora as a geographical movement that over time creates ideological diasporas. Through centuries of migration, the Gujarati had adapted their religious beliefs to include other religio-cultural beliefs they encountered along the way. As the British Gujarati are non-proselytising, non-text-based practitioners of their beliefs, they expected their encounter with Christianity to influence their community based religious practices. Some British Gujarati individually and independently chose to convert to an exclusive self-identity as to British Evangelical Christian. Their decision had multiple repercussions for them, their families and their broader community networks.

The second part of this thesis begins by detailing the combination of mixed research methods situated in ethnography to determine the changes in the life experiences of the British Gujarati Christian Converts. I then used this methodology to examine the sub-questions:

a. *How have the structural family relationships within the British Gujarati family been altered through instances of conversion?*

b. *How is the sense of belonging of the British Gujarati Christian Convert formed?*

c. *What elements influence, inform and shape the exercise of authority in the life of the British Gujarati Christian Convert?*

The theme of family roles was broadly examined through Bourdieu's theory of social fields, habitus and agency. The theme of locational belonging was evaluated through de Certeau's theory of 'space' and 'place', and structural power dynamics. The final theme of practical authority combines Bourdieu and de Certeau and used muted group theory as a way of exploring innovative change in social field and 'space' and 'place' theories.

7.2 Summary of Chapters

My initial motivation for this project was a personal desire to address the marginalised experiences of British Gujarati Christian Converts in their relevant British Gujarati social

fields and how they adjusted to their British Evangelical Christian identity. Beginning with a glimpse into the life of British Gujarati Converts to Christianity, this research is the first of its kind giving voice to the initial generation of Converts. Once I had located a small group of converts, I conducted a thorough in-depth ethnographic research that included a variety of methods. The themes of family roles, locational belonging and practised authority were generated from the data. The detailed empirical account presented the opportunity to discover and analyse how and to what degree Converts embrace a transcultural self-identity. Autoethnography allowed a heuristic approach to the data collection and aspects of the analysis. The research seeks to address the lack of scholarship on the life experiences of the British Gujarati after their Christian conversion.

The Literature Review chapter began with a comprehensive evaluation of diaspora studies that opened with traditional definitions to indicate how conventional approaches delineate the migratory experiences. Theorists focusing on behavioural components of diaspora studies address the topic from alternative perspectives, which indicated the complications of ongoing changes in diasporic identities and identification. Additionally, the contributions of Majority World theorists such as Stuart Hall, Brij Lal, Ambe Pande and Arjun Appadurai display changes in the theory as a result of their personal connection with the subject of diaspora. Ideological diaspora identified through conversion to Christianity, exposes social identity and identification issues. Jenkins refers to the challenge of self-identity as "those who appear not to know who they are" (2004:6).

Chapter 4 describes some of the adverse effects of conversion on the changed roles and relationships within the family. Research participants' responses to conversion by immediate family members clearly showed that all experienced some element of fracture in family roles and relationships. As a result of their change in beliefs, Converts initiated a conflict in understanding of roles within the family. They actively avoided or refused to participate in activities that might include any custom that may have remotely connected to British Gujarati religious practices or was not visible in the church.

Varying degrees of extraction from the family demonstrated the potential of an agent's personal choices to determine the level of family cohesion. The disruption brought about by the change in self-identity altered family relationships as individuals chose definitive acts often resulting in a period of unstable housing and very real threats and acts of physical abuse. On very rare occasions, conversion led to other family members to convert, thus changing the relational dynamics of several family members. This showed the difference of agency dependent on embodied capital of gender and birth

positions and economic capital. Some family members with higher capital influenced the roles of individual family members with lesser capital, thus lesser agency.

The family structures went through a process of change as the religio-cultural understanding of family roles on the part of the convert shifted in focus from one social field to another. Even though conversion shocked the family, adjustments eventually occurred. As part of the diasporic movement, the family itself took on new forms and adapted to shape hybridized social fields overlapping with British Evangelical and British Gujarati social fields.

The family habitus as 'structuring structure' that kept people's roles and relationships in place was altered through the conversion of one family member, as was evident in Rani Darshan's experience. Eventually as relationships and roles were adjusted there was a broadening of the base of doxa. The initial alteration of behaviour toward family members due to conversion was later adjusted through relationships. For some converts' individual family members or entire families, the news of change in religious self-identity as Christian became less important than their relational roles with the family. This was best seen within the Bhakt family. Interaction at religio-cultural family gatherings like Raksha Gupta's *yadgiri,* Rani Darshan's mother's funeral and the Bhakt baby shower and baptism provided overlaps with social fields and increased agency of the convert and the collective agency of the family.

Fulfilling combined religio-cultural duty was shown as beneficial in adding value of collective *dharma* as the family's combined agency and doxa. The family's traditional embodied cultural capitals such as strength of family relationships through endogamy, the birth of children, (especially sons) that held higher significance for social mobility and survival during first generation diaspora diminished. Instead, individualised objectified capital such as a home or other material assets that helped keep the family connected and increased potential networks became more relevant as they symbolised stability.

Most individual Converts have made strong connections to British Evangelical Christian communities and adjusted their family structures to fit. In situations where there was only one Convert in the family however, there were long-term fissures in their British Gujarati social fields and the relationships within.

The research showed that symbolic interaction through cultural events meant individual agency worked between nominal (as the labelled identity) and virtual (as the experienced identity) contributing to increased capital. The celebration of *Rakshabandan*

with unclarified religio-cultural origins was one example where individual agency significantly contributed to embodied capital.

Symbolic violence in terms of extraction from the family was potentially resolved through events that affirmed relationships. Alternatively, British Gujarati Christian Converts became part of exclusive British Evangelical Christian social fields that attempted to provide them with a replacement version of family. However, their British Gujarati family may feel the sense of permanent loss and abandonment.

Chapter 5 followed the changes in locational belonging as the British Gujarati Christian Convert defined their self-identity as Christian by leaving Hindu places worship and entered the church as the new location of practice. The converted self-identity is affirmed by the identification of the convert in the appropriately defined religious structure. The contribution to the identification of the converts is determined by whom they are seen and where they are seen. In this sense, the idea of space and place became relevant. Prior to her conversion, Sunita Darji had not noticed any churches. The buildings occupied a physical space that bore no significance other than landmarks. Her places of interaction were her home, the public *mandir,* and the places where others shared certain categorisation as British Gujarati.

For the Convert, the church represented the 'place' where Christians gathered, hence Sunita interacted with the space and participated within it as a place. The churches became physical structures with significance for her self-identity and identification. The church structure represented a new authoritative framework that she had chosen through her changed self-identity. Hence walking out of the *mandir* and into the church is a recognised identification that categorised her as a former Hindu and current Christian. Her physical movement is her identity statement.

The change in the social field through locational shift is demarcated. Sunita unmuted her self-identity through the shift. The defined shared 'place' states an identity whereas the 'space' is yet unformed and imprecise. The initial result is a liminal occupancy by the new convert through an initial tactic or manoeuvre. Those already in place practise a certain habitus of inclusion. The entrance of the new agent readjusts the agencies of those already who were there previously.

Within the British Evangelical Christian social field, belonging is initiated through the verbal declaration of the choice to self-identify as Christian. The participants in the research had a variety of definitive moments of recollection as they recognised their decision to change their self-identity. For Raksha Gupta, it was at the age of fifteen as she

walked up a hill on her return home from school (Raksha/inv/1). Rani Darshan recalled the exact details of the incident where she called out to the God of righteousness and believed she heard a voice in her right ear that directed her to the Bible (Rani/inv/2). Rani's husband Mohan recollected his emotional response while at a home Bible study group when he heard the words of a particular hymn (Mohan/inv/1). All of the instances of epiphany occurred privately. However, the public declaration within the church building is a part of the British Evangelical habitus.

Baptism is usually the next step. At this point the binary of locational belonging becomes a decisive factor as a public declaration of new self-identity that replaces the former identity. The importance of locational belonging of the British Gujarati Christian Convert is difficult to overstress as the implication is that the church building is the locus of Christian self-identity and identification, and Hindu places became the locations of identification of Hindus. The converts, as a diaspora within the broader British Gujarati diaspora places of belonging, are doubly extracted.

Migration from Gujarat to Britain limit their places of belonging, especially for first generation British Gujarati. Language difficulties restrict their interactions, not simply in terms of communicating with indigenous people, but the difficulty of reading English sufficiently to be able to travel independently from one place to another. In this respect, their physical movements in the host country follow the same pattern as their initial movement from India to Britain. Their movements are guided by their relational ties to another British Gujarati.

For the British Gujarati Christian Convert to venture into a church where there were no others like them meant that their places of belonging had to be re-negotiated along with their new relational ties. As the British Gujarati Christian Convert moved to the British Evangelical Christian social fields, the change in their agency and capitals is more evident than the internalised ideological shift. Their dependency on the agency of those with a more vital knowledge of the doxa guided the British Gujarati Christian's sense of belonging.

Chapter 6 provided in-depth illustrations of the way that the British Gujarati Christian Converts process the challenges as they live out their convert identity. For the majority of the BGC, their original conversion experience polarised their position in their social fields. They are defined by others either as British Gujarati, or British Evangelical Christian. Much of the outlining of their structured self-identity is an attempt to conform to a localised version of British Evangelical Christianity.

Within the real-life situations of their social fields the British Gujarati Christian Converts create unique ways to use their agency and cultural capitals to influence and expand doxa. On one hand, they maintain doxa in a specific social field while simultaneously contributing to the creation of new doxa that overlaps with multiple social fields. While habitus as patterns change, they must do so without rejecting or being rejected by any entire social field. The agent's negotiations must cautiously push boundaries of social fields toward areas of overlap.

Raksha Gupta's and Rani Darshan's struggles with their agency within their British Gujarati social fields became more pronounced resulting in their withdrawal from other agents in those fields. The tactic of withdrawal from one social field is never complete. Interaction with the new Christian social field offers an alternate agency, but at the same time their ability to understand the structural authority is made difficult as their previous authoritative structures have a lingering impact on their identity. The restructure of their family relationships mutes certain family roles. Through their individual understanding of subjective authority, they made choices to re-engage with their Gujarati identity, thus stretching personal agency.

Rani Darshan's challenges of her understanding and expression of authority as an individual Convert were partially overcome when her husband Mohan converted. His strength of authority led to the conversion of his parents and other family members. The Darshan family social field's structural authority was entirely altered by the stronger agency of the eldest son, Mohan. Rani's personal challenge of how she used her individual authority was at her mother's funeral hosted by the London Church. On this occasion, while in the church, her authority structures of British Gujarati family and British Evangelical Christianity clashed. Her previously held binary of the interpretation of British Evangelical Christian doxa versus the doxa of British Gujarati family roles and relationships faced re-evaluation. She resolved the clash by using the London Church as her 'place' of belonging where she used her agency. While she made the choice as an individual, the change in the habitus of the location was influenced by the previous memorial service and the manner in which the Bhakt family practised their authority. The Bhakts adjusted their interpretations of 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu) in the British Evangelical Church and British Gujarati as normative practice for their purposes.

The London Church as a location while within the structural authority of British Evangelical Christianity extended their habitus through the use of British Gujarati artefacts. The flexibility of the habitus as empowering the Converts was powerfully

demonstrated by the Bhakt family. This occurred through their celebrations of the life events of the upcoming birth of a child, and the baptism of their two daughters. The interplay of multiple agencies in multiple fields adjusts the habitus as a structuring structure. These uses of tactics rearranged the structural framework that resulted in modifying the agency, capitals and doxa within British Gujarati religio-cultural practices and British Evangelical Christianity, as the Converts and missionaries in that locale continually interact with multiple Evangelical Christian social fields.

The symbolic violence to the nominal identity as a label, is renegotiated through symbolic interactions among agents within and between the social fields. Family roles in common life events such as births, deaths and marriages hold value in multiple social fields, thus revealing the potential of manoeuvrability between social field boundaries. The shaping of habitus through celebrations of *Rakshabandan* and Diwali as an influential element within the British Gujarati framework has all but vanished among the Converts, limiting practised authority amongst the British Gujarati and Converts.

The attempt of the British Evangelical Christians to modify and unmute the British Gujarati Christian Convert's religio-cultural celebration was juxtaposed with their aspiration to draw the British Gujarati family and friends of the Converts towards the church. Their tactic in adjusting the celebration of Diwali by use of their structural authority within the church locale did little to penetrate the British Gujarati social field at the anticipated level. However, there was sufficient impact that encouraged the Converts at the London Church to create similar and more successful events for their community a few years later.

7.3 Original Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis adds to the knowledge on the Gujarati diaspora that specifically includes the Christian element. It has offered an approach to diaspora research that explores ideological diaspora resulting from geographical diaspora which leads to the alteration of religio-cultural practices. Additionally, it adds to the literature concerning the impact of Gujarati diasporas on their changes in ideology that in some cases has led to conversion to Evangelical Christianity. Furthermore, it addresses the gap in the inquiry into the problems that arise from conversion self-identity and identification by others. Binaries of identification imposed by self and others cause the relocation of the Convert from British Gujarati religio-cultural communities to exclusive British Evangelical Christian ones.

I have demonstrated some of the ways the British Gujarat Christian Converts negotiated their engagement in British Evangelical Christian social fields. This was accomplished by intersecting applications of Pierre Bourdieu's theories of social fields, habitus, agency, and capitals alongside details of British Gujarati conversion life as experienced. This thesis has demonstrated some of the British Gujarati Christian Converts' innovative methods to create ways into authoritative frameworks. This was achieved by use of Michel de Certeau's approach to 'space' and 'place', and power dynamics, with the interplay of tactics. By using such tactics, the Converts created individualised flexibilities of religio-cultural practices in authoritative frameworks. As adjustments in habitus, these contributed to innovative ways to broaden and strengthen overlapping religio-cultural social fields and add to the doxa.

I have extended the theoretical framework in terms of how the British Gujarati use their multiple individual positionings of dominance and subordination. The use of muted group theory along with Bourdieu and de Certeau refutes the British Evangelical Christian idea of the binary of predetermined dominant and subordinate groups that previously immobilised the nature of symbolic capitals. My research shows that British Gujarati Christian social fields become broader as individuals within the subordinate groups, as identified by muted group theory, use their agency to create their personal tactics to unmute themselves. By doing so, British Gujarati Christian Converts adjust their self-identity and external identification to broaden their boundaries in their religio-cultural social fields.

Through my extensive data collection process, I have given voice to hidden and silenced aspects of British Gujarati individual and collective identities and identification and revealed the level to which personal agency can be manipulated and modified in their social fields. At the same time, I have provided evidence that various aspects of doxa specific to distinctive social fields can remain in place without rejecting and replacing all forms of cultural capitals.

Using de Certeau's 'pedestrian speech act', the creation of a new path can be initiated by a single individual (1984:99). Muted group theory recognizes the efforts of the subordinate group to gradually influence the dominant group. My research has revealed how the palimpsest of British Gujarati religio-cultural events provided examples for British Gujarati Christian Converts to unmute themselves. Incremental unmuting by individuals occurred as they sought to create multiple belonging within their social fields.

Through my focused research of individual life histories and interviews, the case study on the London Church events, and British Gujarati religio-cultural celebrations I challenged common techniques of confined religious practices such as the use of the term 'brother, 'sister' and 'family' in the British Evangelical social fields to incorporate the broadest social fields of British Gujarati Hinduism and British Evangelical Christianity. The conscious and sub-conscious abilities of individuals and groups to interpret, interact with, and alter cultural practices such as *Rakshabandan* and Diwali in multiple religio-cultural social fields simultaneously became apparent.

My research determined the value of individual and communal relationships as a highly important component that contributes to unmuting the Convert self-identity and identifications. By evaluating, maintaining, adjusting and reframing religio-cultural practices for themselves, the Converts have demystified their approaches to increase the networking relationships between their social fields. Finally, my research has shown that by relationship between people, places and practices through incremental changes in habitus can create transcultural overlaps in and between British Gujarati and British Evangelical Christian communities.

This research looked at the lived experiences of British Gujarati converts, asking the question, *By what means and to what extent do the British Gujarati become transcultural through Christian conversion?* In the following section, a summary of my final official field visit to my British Gujarati Convert community in North London provides answers to that question.

7.4 Discussing Transcultural Experience with the London Participants

As the work on this research project drew to a close, I recognised that during my investigations into the British Gujarati Convert experience, we had collectively recognised, contributed to and formed ideas of our self-identity. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, I benefitted from the overlap between the British Gujarati Converts, the British Gujarati, the British Evangelical Christians and academia. Furthermore, I revisited Bird and Lamourex Stoles' claim that: 'Awareness of cultural and religious norms allows us to respect various etiquette[s] and reciprocity' (2014:85).[1] With these ideas in mind I contacted the Converts from London and visited them for the first time since the relaxing of Covid travel restrictions in Britain in early 2022.

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[1] This idea was initially introduced earlier in the thesis in section 3.6.2 Role of the Researcher in Section 3.6.2.

In March 2022, I invited the London participants to meet with me in person so I could explain how I had used their data. The group of five who were able to attend represented more than half of the key participants in the research. These were Minakshi Shah, Raksha Mistry, Rani, Mohan and Kanta Darshan. I have also explained my research to Michael Viner, Vina Gregario and Priti and Prakash Bhakt on separate occasions. After informing them of the general idea of the research, I shared how I used Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu, and muted group theory to analyse what I had observed. Full details of my field notes on the explanation of the research analysis were written up immediately after the event.[2]

Following the explanation, the participants discussed how they benefitted from being involved in the research. Rani Darshan recalled the memory of her mother's funeral and how seamlessly the BG family adjusted to using the London church as a place to gather for their collective time of grief. Raksha remembered the strengthening of her cultural ties with her family. We spoke of similarities in our individual conversion experiences that had isolated us from our families. Through our mutual unmuting we were able to discuss changes in interactions with family members. Many relationships have been restored as a result of careful consideration of the values of the British Gujarat culture through the *yadgiri*[3] and the way such events uphold Evangelical Christian interpretation of the Bible.

Minakshi Shah and Vina Gregario recognised the importance of unmuting the voice of the disabled in the British Gujarati conversion experience. Mohan Darshan's experience with the relative who shamed and rejected him made sense when he was able to connect the theories of Bourdieu and de Certeau to the way he was treated at a family event.

At the time of writing, the Gujarati Family Camp in Leicester is planning their three days event for August 2022. Although the Leicester participants have not had the benefit of the level of involvement in my research which the London group did, they have asked me to be part of the leadership for the summer camp. My role will be to introduce the idea of Converts sharing cultural events that include their BG family and community through participating in British Gujarati cultural activities. Overall, the research participants believe that through their involvement in the research project they have a better

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[2] See Appendix M for Field Notes on how I explained my research to the London Participants.

[3] Memorial service

understanding of their conversion experiences can better explore their own ideas of transcultural faith expressions.

7.5 Limitations

My research provides a contribution to knowledge in terms of British Gujarati Christian conversion but is limited to a select group within the British Gujarati minority. This provides the obvious advantage of depth of detail in this study. As no monolithic cultural representation exemplifies the British Gujarati Christian Convert populations, there is a need for wider research into the other aspects of ideological diaspora amongst the British Gujarati. Their sub-cultural identities and identifications from multiple contexts are broad, complicated and continue to change. Indeed, many Converts have assimilated very well into the British Evangelical Christian communities, although, other minority Converts' groups would have diverse experiences.

As this is an in depth autoethnographic study, my relational context is from the perspective of a female second-generation diaspora, a British Gujarati Christian convert, in an exogamous marriage with several decades of involvement in Evangelical Christian organizations throughout Europe and North America. Inevitably, there are limitations in selection bias in my research and interpretations of the data.

The following points detail the noteworthy limitations of my research:

1. My connection with the female participants was higher than with male participants.

2. I usually requested interviews with British Gujarati men in public places or with female family members present due to cultural sensitivity.

3. My insider approach as British Gujarati posed limitations to deeper access to those Converts whose conversion was unknown to their family or in their community.

4. The participants were aware of my leadership connections in the church.

5. While on occasion the Converts introduced me to their British Gujarati family, there was little opportunity for follow up visits or interaction with male family members.

Two other significant matters limited the main focus to British Gujarati Christian converts within the Greater London area. Firstly, time limited further research in other locations. Secondly, Covid 2019 travel restrictions began in March 2020 and prevented

further face to face field visits. Internet video meetings could not be used to replicate any continued meaningful relationship with previous participants. Furthermore, once restrictions lifted, there was insufficient time or resources to continue the interaction with the community at the same level as prior to the interruption, thus bringing an unexpected end to data collection.

7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis opens the possibilities of potential research into a variety of areas. Research into the lived experiences of the ideological shifts of other diaspora people groups around the world would be valuable in the area of diaspora and migration studies. A further study into the impact of conversion on endogamy and exogamy would be a benefit to studies on practical theology and diversification of cultures in subsequent generations.

Gender aspects of Christian conversion amongst British Gujarati were touched upon, but require further focused investigations. The growing interest in engaging with cultural practices with and amongst people groups due to diaspora and migration might also encourage studies that explore the impact of virtual social fields created by means of the internet.

During my data collection I interacted with individuals and communities of many different diaspora people groups who identify as British Evangelical Christians. Many more minority groups would benefit from investigation into their transcultural practices. There are ample opportunities for further research into the challenges of ideological diaspora and adjustment in and between cultures.

7.7 Afterword

I stare at my computer and prepare for a zoom gathering at the London Church (October 2022). The small hall seems unusually crowded. As I try to spot Raksha, I see different faces, women in colourful *saris* looking for friends and saving seats. Giggling girls of all ages some in pretty party dresses or sparkly *sharwal kamees* and such lovely *lengha*! Young men dressed in jeans or khaki pants and a baseball hat paired with a *kurta* or a sports T-shirt. As the crowd settle down and the announcements are made, I realise it is Diwali. From my secluded basement room in Oxford, I sing along with the crowd.

The unstable internet connection blurs the faces of individuals so it is hard to differentiate between Raksha, Rani, Mohan, Vina, my custom British Gujarati Christian family from their friends and family members. A young woman I recognised from my

field visits stands up and shares the story of Diwali. "Ram travelled through many dangerous dark places to rescue his wife Sita who had been kidnapped by an evil king. After defeating the king, the people set *diva* outside their homes to light the way back for the heroic couple. Light overcomes the darkness and shows us the way."

Someone has made a beautiful *rangoli*, a beautiful colourful piece of art used to decorate the floor at the entrance of a building during celebrations. Templates are used and heavily dusted with vibrantly coloured powder. A new template creates another design in different colour. Layer after layer of templates and colours create unique designs that despite their breath-taking beauty will eventually be smudged by trampling feet and washed away in the next rainfall. While we all appreciate the momentary beauty and diversity, like my research, neither the unique design nor the distinctive experiences will never be exactly replicated.

As the presentations end the chairs are moved back some people disappear to prepare for the shared meal. Everyone else prepares for *garba,* the traditional dance of Diwali. The electric keyboard strikes a chord and Sunita Darji takes the handheld microphone and begins the call and repeat style of *Prabhu Isu bhajan*. I believe I have contributed something toward all of us British Gujarati Christian Converts reclaiming our multiple identities. FN/BGLC1/21

APPENDICES

Appendix A: London Interview Participants

Name	Gender	Birth Place/ Generation	Interview Date	Interview min. sec.	Location	Abbreviation
Raksha Gupta	F	India/1.5	18/04/16	48.44	Her home	Raksha/inv/1
			08/02/17	29.4	Her home	Raksha/inv/2
			03/11/17	7.14	Her home	Raksha/inv/3
			07/09/18	3.27	Her home	Raksha/inv/4
Rani Darshan	F	India/1.5	04/12/16	83.07	BGLC1	RaniD/inv/1
			26/07/17	27.19	BGLC1	RaniD/inv/2
			12/09/18		Her home	RaniD/inv/3
Mohan Darshan	M	India/1	08/08/17	53.2	House sitting at US missionary home	MohanD/inv/1
			11/07/18	5.12	His home	MohanD/inv/2
Jayesh Darshan	M	India/1	29/07/19	34.20	BGLC1	JayeshD/inv/1
Kanta Darshan	F	England/2	02/06/19	29.11	BGLC1	KantaD/inv/1
Bhanu Darshan	F	England/2	12/09/18	27.32	Parent's/Her Home	BhanuD/inv/1
Anand Darshan	M	England/2	11/07/18	22.34	Parent's/His home	AnandD/inv/1
Priti Bhakt	F	Kenya/1.5	20/08/17	46.51	Her home	PritiB/inv/1
			20/08/17	12.37	Her home	PritiB/inv/2
			24/11/19	4.3	BGLC1	PritiB/inv/3
Prakash Bhakt	M	England/2	20/08/17	19.45	His Home	PrakashB/inv/1
Rina Divya	F	England/2	28/07/19	24.21	BGLC1	Rina/inv/1
			29/07/19	7.47	BGLC1	Rina/inv/2
Urvashi Divya	F	Uganda/1.5	29/09/19	27.10	BGLC1	Urvashi/inv/1
Jivan Khanna*	M	India/1	26/11/16	66.09	His home	Jivan/inv/1
			26/11/16	24.47	His home	Jivan/inv/2
			08/23/18	18.26	His car going to Leicester	Jivan/inv/3
			08/23/18	30.37	His car going to Leicester	Jivan/inv/4
			08/23/18	34.18	His car going to Leicester	Jivan/inv/5
Vina Gregario	F	Kenya/1.5	07/08/17	109.52	House sitting at missionary home	Vina/inv/1

Minakshi Shah	F	Kenya/1	26/11/17	118.14	Her Home (shared with brother)	MinakshiS/inv/1
Anila Shah	F	Kenya/1	26/11/17	13.42	Her sister's home	AnilaS/inv/1
Hema Shah	F	Kenya/1	26/11/17	20.05	Her sister's home	HemaS/inv/1
Jinesh Shah	M	Kenya/1	26/11/17	10.38	His sister's home	JineshS/inv/1
Sunita Darji	F	India/1	24/04/19	48.15	BGLC1	Sunita/inv/1
Kirti Kopani	F	England/1.5	14/07/18	27.12	BGLC1	Kirti/inv/1
Philip Night	M	Kenya/1	11/05/16	39.30	BGLC1	Philip/inv/1
Harshad Dev *	M	Kenya/1	21/02/21	30.12	Zoom	Harshad/inv/1
Pritesh Jay	M	India/1	10/06/16	9.52	Raksha's Home	Pritesh/inv/1
			10/06/16	9.03	Raksha's Home	Pritesh/inv/2
			10/06/16	9.04	Raksha's Home	Pritesh/inv/3
			10/06/16	9.05	Raksha's Home	Pritesh/inv/4
Rajesh Josh*	M	Kenya/2	14/08/17	30.09	South Kensington café	Rajesh/inv/1
			14/08/17	23.33	South Kensington café	Rajesh/inv/2
			22/09/21	20.18	Zoom	Rajesh/inv/3

The names of Khanna, Dev and Joshi are all marked with *. Their real surname is Patel which could have been used, but would create confusion as none of them are related to each other.

Appendix B: Leicester Interview Participants

Name	Gender	Birth place	Interview date	Interview min. sec.	Location	Abbreviation
Beena Karadi*	F	Kenya	26/08/2017	43.09	Leicester	Beena/inv/L
Chanda Bhachu	F	Uganda	26/08/2017	75.17	Leicester	Chanda/inv/L
Radha Babulal	F	India	26/08/2017	64.40	Leicester	Radha/inv/L
Manesh Katya	M	India	26/08/2017	17.03	Leicester	Manesh/inv/L
Ranchod Lal*	M	India	26/08/2017	38.25	Leicester	Ranchod/inv/L
Ramila Pankaj	F	Kenya	27/08/2017	63.32	Leicester	Ramila/inv/L
Sita Ramesh	F	India	27/08/2017	49.02	Leicester	Sita/inv/L
John Kanu*	M	India	27/08/2017	27.00	Leicester	John/inv/L
Valub Ashok	M	Kenya	27/08/2017	30.55	Leicester	Valub/inv/L
Bharti Shaant*	F	India	27/08/2017	34.12	Leicester	Bharti/inv/L

The names of Karadi, Lal, Kanu and Shaant are all marked with *. Their real surname is Patel which could have been used, but would create confusion as none of them are related to each other.

Appendix C: Field Notes

The field notes were handwritten over the course of my ethnographic research visits to the community. While the participants were aware of my role as researcher, I became very closely connected with the group as a whole and wrote the notes hastily, and added details when I was afforded privacy usually very late at night.

Field Notes: *Yadgiri* Nov 2016   FN/Y

Field Notes: BGLC1 2015   FN/BGLC1/15

Field Notes: BGLC1 2016   FN/BGLC1/16

Field Notes: BGLC1 2017   FN/BGLC1/17

Field Notes: BGLC1 2018   FN/BGLC1/18

Field Notes: Mandir 2018   FN/M/18

Field Notes: BGLC1 2019   FN/BGLC1/19

Field Notes: BGLC1 2021   FN/BGLC1/21

Field Notes: Sunday Gathering FN/S

Field Notes: *Garba* 2018   FN/G/18

Field Notes: *Yeshu Satsang* 2016 FN/D

Field Notes: BGLC1 Missionaries FN/BGLC1/AM

Field Notes: Baby Shower   FN/BS

Field Notes: Baptism   FN/BAP

Field Notes: Leicester Camp 2017 FN/LC

Field Notes: Shanti 2017   FN/Shanti

Field Notes: Mrs. Gupta/ Rani 2018 FN/U/RD/Mrs.G

Field Notes: Usha/Raksha   FN/U/R

Field Notes: London 2022   FN/L/22

Appendix D: Field Notes: Baptism April 2019

Lina Bhakt Baptism Speech:

Hello everyone.

Thank you for joining us today to celebrate this special day with me and my family. It's so nice to have all of you here.

I wanted to tell you a little bit about my relationship with God. Yes, today is a special day, but it's not the day I suddenly become a follower of Jesus. I have had Jesus in my life for several years now. And knowing what it cost Jesus for me to be forgiven for my sins makes me feel very loved.

See, with Jesus in my life I know I have got a best friend for life. Someone who will be happy when I am happy but also will feel sad with me whenever I am sad. I never ever ever have to feel alone again.

I like that I can chat to God. That I get to pray to him about things in my life. And because he is real, he answers those prayers. Sometimes when I'm scared, I just know that Jesus is with me and I do not need to be afraid anymore. He is steady and always there. Mum and dad might get angry with me.... But God doesn't. He loves me unconditionally and forgives all the bad things I do.

Sometimes I find it really hard to believe that there is someone in this world that loves me so much, that they would rather get in trouble for the things I might do wrong. How many of you would take the blame for someone else? I know I would struggle too. But that's exactly what Jesus did for me. He takes the blame for all the bad things I do and tells God that he has already paid for those sins. That is such a wonderful gift, that I am not in trouble.

And that is why I am getting baptised today. Because Jesus asks that if anyone believes in him and trusts in him to be their Saviour, then they must get baptised in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I know there is nothing magical about the water in this ceremony. The real magic is that Jesus chose me, and I chose him.

Appendix E: Photo Bhakt Children's Baptism

Appendix F: Photo *Yadgiri* Announcement

Yaadgiri Naa Bhajan
A Gathering to Remember
Saturday, 12th November
4:00 PM

All are welcome as we give thanks for
family members and friends who have passed.

Satsang includes Isu Bhajans, prayers, and brief
words of encouragement by Usha.

Vegetarian food to follow.
Kindly RSVP to ██████████████ for catering purposes

Appendix G: Photo *Diwali* Announcement October 2021
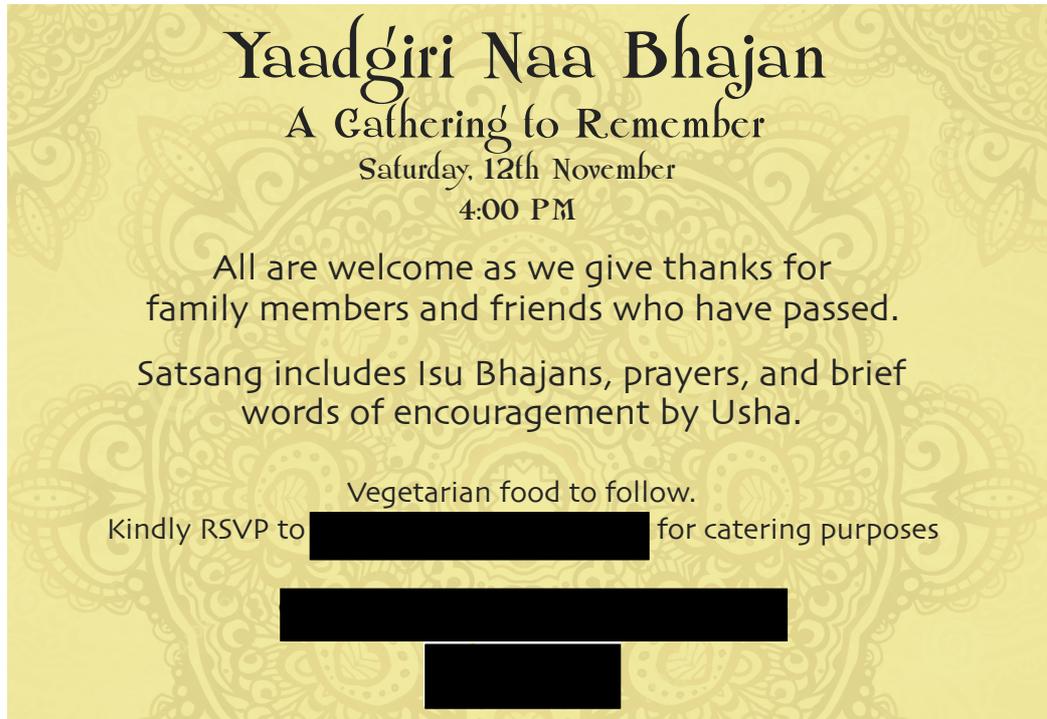
Appendix H: Photo *Yadgiri* Display

Yeshu Satsang Celebration

During this Diwali festival season, come and experience Jesus Bhajans (worship) and explore why Jesus described Himself as the Returning Bridegroom who invites us to His Wedding Feast.

Saturday 22 October 2016
6:00pm - 8:30pm

Satsang worship led by Imagine.
Time to explore and reflect.
Refreshments provided.

Admission is free.

Bookings via

Appendix J: *Rakshabandan* **Questionnaire**

Rakshabandan Questionnaire July 2019

How do you observe Rakshabandan?

_____

_____

_____

Please share your understanding of background stories of Raksha bandan.

(continue on the back of this page)_____

_____

_____

_____

What did you do at Rakshabandan when you were growing up?

_____

_____

_____

How do you observe Christmas?

_____

_____

_____

Please share your understanding of background stories of Christmas. (continue

on the back of this page)_____

_____

_____

What did you do at Christmas when you were growing up?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your help with my research! Sincerely, Ushaben

Appendix K: *Rakshabandan* **Questionnaire Results**

Sixty participants took part in the questionnaire. Thirty of them were British Gujarati (BG), with an equal split of men and women. Thirty of them were British Gujarati Christians (BGC) with an equal split of men and women. Some participants used multiple terms to describe their activities.

1. How do you observe *Rakshabandan*?

How do you observe Rakshabandan?	Give/receive rakhi, (in person) Give gifts, share meals/sweets with family (in person)	Send/receive rakhi/gift through the post	Send/receive Internet greeting/ gift	Do not observe
BGC Women	6	1	0	8 of 15
BGC Men	5	3	0	9 of 15
BG Women	14	5	2	0 of 15
BG Men	14	2	0	1 of 15

2. Please share your understanding of background stories of *Rakshabandan*.

Understanding of the background of Rakshabandan	Religious or Tradition	Protection. Pray for life long Promise to help in future. Honour	Brother/sister love, honour, celebrate the relationship	Don't know/ Don't recall
BGC Women	2	10	2	1
BGC Men	3	9	3	4
BG Women	5	10	6	0
BG Men	4	4	3	4

3. What did you do at *Rakhabandan* when you were growing up?

What did you do growing up?	Give/receive rakhi (in person). Give gifts, share meals/sweets with family (in person).	Send/receive rakhi/gift through the post.	Pray for life long protection. Promise to help in future. Honour	Listen to the story as told by matriarch.	Did not observe/ Don't recall
BGC Women	15	6	5	2	0 of 15
BGC Men	15	1	5	1	0 of 15
BG Women	15	0	5	5	0 of 15
BG Men	15	0	3	0	0 of 15

4. How do you observe Christmas?

How do you observe Christmas?	Read Bible, Pray, Light candle (at home)	Decorate home, Give gifts, Father Christmas, Visit family, friends, food,	Give to the poor.	Go to church.	Parties	Do not observe
BGC Women	7	10	0	15	1	0 of 15
BGC Men	3	13	0	14	5	1 of 15
BG Women	0	15	0	3	5	0 of 15
BG Men	0	12	1	0	2	1 of 15

5. Please share your understanding of the background stories of Christmas.

Understanding of background	Jesus birth	Christian holy day	St. Nicholas	Easter/ Salvation	An incarnation of God	Religious story for children	Nothing
BGC Women	15	5	0	5	0	2	0
BGC Men	15	0	0	7	0	0	0
BG Women	15	0	0	3	2	0	0
BG Men	9	2	3	2	1	1	2

6. What did you do (as Hindu) at Christmas when you were growing up?

What did you do when growing up?	School activity	Take gift/ visit Christian neighbours.	Visit church	Nothing/ Don't recall
BGC Women	2	5	3	8
BGC Men	8	4	1	2
BG Women	8	5	1	6
BG Men	3	6	1	6

Appendix L: Shanti's Story

Shanti's story

I paid to attend this all day multi church Christian conference at a local church. Early in the day there was one white English woman who was kind of odd, sort of disruptive, causing a mild disturbance, by coughing really loud and interrupting the speaker. It became obvious that the woman had mental health issues, everyone tried to ignore her weird behaviour. Part of the day was small group discussions. When the people began to choose groups, the leader took this lady and me to one side, away from the others and we were a group of three by ourselves. We didn't discuss the topic everyone else was talking about because it was obvious the woman was not capable. The rest of the day, any time the groups split up, I was expected to remain to one side with the leader and the odd woman. It was obvious to me that they didn't think I understood the conference or knew what they were doing.

Appendix M: Field Notes Final Meeting London March 12th 2022

Since 2015 I had planned to collect information on the British Gujarat Christians. This was done by staying with Raksha and spending many weeks and months in the community. I collected information by interviews, making field notes, attending special events and by becoming a part of the community. Through my relationships with them, I met their friends and family and sometimes visited their homes so that I could experience life as a Convert in the way they do.

I used two French sociologists, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau, and Muted Group theory to explain different ways of studying society. I used the illustration of a house to explain the difference between passing the house while walking in the street, to visiting the house, to living in the house. Each experience offers different perspectives of society.

Pierre Bourdieu might look at society like an interior designer. Michel de Certeau might look at the society like a builder. Muted Group Theory might look at society like someone who is inside. They are all looking at the same society but focusing from different angles to understand how it works, how it is controlled, how it might change and who changes it.

I wanted to explain Michel de Certeau's theory of structure as what holds society together and who has the power to either maintain and strengthen the structure and who has the power challenge authority. I explained how we as British Gujarati Converts had to deal with more than one power structure, and often we felt powerless in our capacities to make things work. Sometimes we challenge authority head on like when we convert to Christianity. Sometimes we work with authority to gently influence authority like being flexible in areas that have special meanings, like weddings, funerals and births.

Using the idea of authority and rules I introduced Pierre Bourdieu's way of looking at society like a variety of different games. Each one with its own set of rules, perhaps dress code and locations of play. There are assets like language, education or currency known as capitals. The players are agents must possess the necessary capitals and have an understanding of what is held as most valuable within the particular field of play. This may change very slowly as the players interact within the game and with each other to increase their own capitals. Each game played in a specific area or social field where capitals must be used by the agents in the right way. But because all agents are different there are always slight changes. Some rules become less important and some of the things we value change in significance, sometimes this can be subtle, other times it can be quite dramatic.

The structures or social fields do not all exist separately from each other. There are many overlaps with other social fields and we as agents play multiple games in multiple settings. The relevance to our experience as British Gujarat Converts is that fields used to be far away become closer as we overlap with different communities. As agents some of us have made a choice to convert to Christianity. But we are still agents in the social fields of British Gujarati family and community at the same time as agents in the church. Neither our BG community, or the church cannot fully understand how we can function in two very different social fields. When we go from one field to the other, the capitals or assets that work in one field do not always work with the other.

The agents that have the most power in the social field because of the capitals of language, education or history find new ideas difficult to understand because what they hold most valuable in the social field or structure may be in danger of being diminished or destroyed. Agents do not want to lose their strength or dominance, so they isolate those with less influence. The weaker agents become the subordinate group and often struggle to express themselves and be part of the group. They are pushed aside or marginalised and feel they cannot speak out unless they agree with the dominant group.

Those that are part of the dominant group do not always recognise how difficult it is to be a minority or a subordinate. Sometimes they try to help by speaking on the behalf of those that are marginalised. Sometimes they let the subordinate group speak for themselves. However, this requires that the dominant group's language and ways are used by those that are a minority. The is called muted group theory. As Convert's we can't always explain in ways that either group understand because we don't want to be misunderstood or upset anyone.

As British Gujarati Converts, we are dealing with ideas in societies that were there before we chose to convert. It feels impossible for our families to understand why we convert, and it feels equally hard for British Evangelical Christians to understand why we still need our British Gujarati community.

My research found that all of us as British Gujarati Converts have struggled with our family relationships, no longer going to the *mandir* or any place that has anything to do with Hindu religious symbols and making decisions that our new religious beliefs. We don't want to compromise our Christian beliefs, but at the same time we want to honour our family and community ideals. Sometimes British Evangelical Christians do not see why this is important to us.

By looking at all the information I gathered I found stories of our conversion were always hard for some members of our family. We have dealt with this by just staying away from some of them and focusing on the family in the British Evangelical church. Sometimes over time we have been able to restore our family relationships, but they can be strained. Sometimes some members of our families also convert.

Another change after conversion was how we dealt with the *mandir* in the home and out in the public. The public *mandir* is easier because we do not have to attend regularly. The *ghar mandir* for some was more difficult to avoid. Our refusal to participate in rituals was sometimes met with violence but most often with disappointment and anger by our family. This was because we did not fully understand how our families believed that our choice to convert impacted the whole family's life and that our behaviour in this life was connected to each other and impacted our next life.

Some of us have been able to understand that what we were taught by British Evangelical Church leaders did not take our British Gujarati culture into consideration. There were expectations upon us from our family and from the church that were based on assumptions and stereotypes. We did not have a say in how these stereotypes were began and we really want them to change.

In my research I found that many of us have been able to interpret ideas from both the British Gujarat and the British Evangelical Christians for ourselves. This has encouraged us to be more flexible in how we talk, think, act and function with both groups. This was really noticeable in the way Diwali was celebrated at the London Church in 2021.

Before our choice to convert to Christianity, we were used to decisions being made by our elders based on what was good for everyone. When we converted there was British cultural belief that we had to make all our decisions by ourselves, just as we did when we converted. Through our life events of births, deaths and baptisms we found that we could use our own culture to interpret our Christian identity. I refer to this as unmuting, because we are able to speak and make decisions for ourselves.

I found that as Converts there were parts of our culture we had rejected because there was nothing similar in the British culture. One of those things were Rakshabandan. Even though many of the Converts felt that *Rakshabandan* was more cultural than religious and it was a way to honour sibling relationships, we have abandoned the practice as there is nothing similar in the British Christian culture. I think this may be one area we could look at again as some of the younger Converts like Riya could see how she could

strengthen brother/sister relationships between her British Evangelical Christian friends and British Gujarati community.

Appendix N: Research Ethics Framework, Economic and Social Research Council

6 core principles for ethical research:

- Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm.

- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected.

- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed.

- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency.

- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined.

- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided, they should be made explicit.

https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/our-core-principles/

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