



THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN
PALESTINE: AN ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS
NARRATIVES

BY

Mohammed A.M. Arjan

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International Islamic University Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the religious narrative identity of the Palestinians by analyzing various forms of religious narratives of fourteen informants selected from the Palestinian middle class in the south of the West Bank (Hebron and Bethlehem cities). Theoretically, the study adopted a meta-theorizing approach by critically entering into a dialectical dialogue among various theories dealing with the narrative identity in general, and its implications for the religious identity in particular. This integrative approach covered Moral–ethical theories, Self-reflexivity theories, Autobiographical memory, Lived religion Paradigm and Islamic narrative sources. By employing the meta-theorizing strategy, the analysis was able to develop six themes regarding the religious narrative identity namely, unity of life, religious ethics, discursive narratives, practical “embedded” narratives, trajectories narratives and religious experience narratives. These six themes were employed as guidance for analysis and initial orientation of the fieldwork. Methodologically, the study relied on the social life stories, and employed deductive and inductive strategies in its analysis. The main findings of the study, mainly in the first part of the analysis, focused on the social life stories of the informants and their emplotment over the life courses. The findings revealed that the informants attempted to emplot their turning points in order to find integrative narrative identity over the life courses while the centrality of religion in everyday lives was crucial in this integration. The second part of the analysis focuses on different major themes relating to religious narrative identity. In the unity of life theme, the findings manifested the centrality of religious concepts such as *fiṭrah*, religiosity, religious certainty, religious predestination and stability of religious involvements as main manifestations of the unity of Allah in emplotment of an intelligible narrative unity over the life course. Pertaining to discursive religious narratives, the findings showed that there are mutual disruptions between personal religious narrative and master religious narratives. The disruptions generate a sense of religious ontological insecurity and, consequently, shift toward religious transcendence as an alternative narrative. Regarding the religious practices, the findings demonstrated the centrality of various religious practices in configuration of informants’ narrative identities in everyday life and the triumph of Islamic religious practice over folk religious beliefs. Regarding the religious experiences, the analysis disclosed three types of religious experiences: sacred places, religious contemplation, and religious dreams. The findings also found the significant role of the religious experiences in attestation of the unity of Allah and in enhancing religious identity among the informants. The analysis dialectically revealed that religious trajectories provoke religious experiences of the informants and religion contributes to emplotment of the social trajectories in positive ways. The findings further revealed that gender subject is presented in everyday lived religion. Finally, the study suggests a new lens for future research related to themes such as religious agency, relationships between the unity of life and unity of Allah.

ملخص البحث

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على الهوية السردية الدينية لدى الفلسطينيين من خلال تحليل مجموعة أنماط من السرد الديني لدى أربعة عشر محاوراً من الطبقة الوسطى في جنوب الضفة الغربية (بيت لحم والخليل). وقد تبنت الدراسة اتجاهها نظرياً متكاملًا متعدد الاتجاهات عبر الدخول في حوار نقدي ما بين النظريات المتعلقة بالهوية السردية بشكل عام وتطبيقاتها على مستوى السرد الديني خاصة. و شمل الاتجاه النظري المتكامل خمسة توجهات نظرية رئيسية (نظرية الأخلاق، الهوية الذاتية الانعكاسية، الهوية السردية للسير الذاتية، بارادائم الدين في الحياة اليومية، ومصادر السرد الديني في الإسلام). واستطاعت الدراسة عبر توظيف استراتيجيه ما وراء النظرية، الخروج بمجموعة من الثيمات لدراسة الهوية السردية الدينية وهي: (وحدة الحياة، السرد الديني الخطابي، الممارسات السردية الدينية، الخبرات السردية الدينية، و تحولات الحياة السردية). هذه الثيمات استخدمت كموجة للتحليل النظري و الميداني. ومنهجياً، وظفت الدراسة منهجية قصص الحياة وانعكاسية الباحث كاستراتيجيه للتحليل، كما أن استراتيجيات الاستقراء والاستنباط كانت حاضرة أثناء التحليل. قسمت الدراسة التحليل إلى جزئين: الأول تناول قصص الحياة لدى المحاورين عبر دورة الحياة وحبكاتها المختلفة. وأظهرت النتائج أن المحاورين حاولوا حبك التحولات المختلفة في سير حياتهم، بهدف تحقيق تكامل وانسجام على مسار الحياة، شكل الدين في هذا السياق نقطة مركزية في تحقيق هذا الانسجام. تناول الجزء الثاني من التحليل مجموعة من الثيمات الرئيسية المتعلقة ببناء الهوية السردية الدينية لدى الفلسطينيين. وفي البعد الخاص بوحدة الحياة أظهرت النتائج مركزية بعض المفاهيم الدينية مثل الفطرة، اليقينية الدينية، القضاء والقدر كتمظهرات لوحداية الله في عملية حبك سيرة الحياة عبر منحها وحدة سردية ذات معنى خلال دورة الحياة. أما فيما يتعلق بالسرد الديني الخطابي فقد أبانت النتائج أن هنالك إقلاقاً سردياً متبادلاً ما بين السرد الديني الفردي ونظيره ما وراء الفردي في الحياة اليومية للفاعلين الاجتماعيين. وولد هذا الإقلاق شعوراً مقلقاً ومغترباً للأمن الوجودي للسرد الديني الفردي وهذا ساهم بدوره في انزياح الفاعلين الاجتماعيين نحو السرد الديني المتعالى كبديل للسرد ما بعد الفردي وكاستراتيجية للتخفيف من حدة هذا الإقلاق. وقد أظهرت الدراسة على مستوى الممارسات الدينية مركزية الممارسات الدينية المختلفة في تشكيل الحياة اليومية للأفراد، مظاهرة تغليب الممارسات الدينية ذات الأصول الإسلامية على الممارسات المتعلقة بالتدين الشعبي. وقد كشفت الدراسة على مستوى الخبرات الدينية ثلاثة أنماط للخبرات الدينية في السياق الإسلامي وهي المكان كحيز للمقدس، التفكير الديني، والأحلام الدينية. وكشفت النتائج عن أهمية الخبرات الدينية في تأكيد وحدانية الله وتعزيز الهوية الدينية لدى المحاورين. وقد أظهرت الدراسة على مستوى تحولات الحياة المفصلية وحبكاتها أن هنالك علاقة تبادلية ما بينها وما بين الدين كمنتج للمعنى، حيث أشارت النتائج إلى أن تحولات الحياة المفصلية تعمل على إثارة وإحياء الخبرات الدينية لدى الأفراد. وفي المقابل ساهم الدين في إعادة حبك هذه التحولات بصورة إيجابية. وأظهرت الدراسة أهمية النوع الاجتماعي في تشكيل السرد الديني للأفراد. وأخيراً وضعت الدراسة مجموعة من الأضواء لدراسات مستقبلية عن علاقة بالفاعلية الدينية، العلاقة ما بين وحدة الحياة ووحدة الخالق، دور الباحث في دراسة السرد الديني ومنطلقات لدراسة السرد الديني.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Mohammed A.M. Arjan has been approved by the following

Hazizan Md. Noon
Supervisor

Jamil Farooqui
Internal Examiner

Iyad Barghoutti.
External Examiner

Badruddin Bin Hj. Ibrahim.
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Mohammed A.M. Arjan

Signature.....

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**THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN
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Affirmed by Mohammed A.M. Arjan.

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My Narration goes to the memory of my Father Abdallah

To my mother Amena

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This study aims at investigating the religious identity of the Palestinians and it is proposed against the following backdrop. Over the last four decades, sociologists of religion have focused their studies on the centrality of religion in public and private spheres, theorizing over the quintessential role of ideology in all aspects of peoples' social and individual lives. These studies and theorizations, however, have been debated by various critics who can be divided broadly into three groups. The first group belongs to the extremist secular theorists who claim that the role of religion has declined in recent decades due particularly to the imminent socioeconomic and technological changes in modern societies (Wilson, 1982; Bruce, 2011; Norris, 2011). The second group emphasizes that religion has been reduced from public to private spheres (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, 1990; Hammond, 1992; Bellah, 1967, 2007).¹ The third group argues that religion is still playing a central role in the public arena (Casanova, 1994; McGuire, 1988, 2008; Heelas, 1996, 1998, 2008, Habermas, 2008). The main example of the centrality of religion in the public sphere is the resurgence of religion manifested, for instance, in the form of religious movements including political religious developments.²

¹In other words, these theorists argue that religion is still playing an important role in society, yet as a result of differentiation in societies, religion has become a private affair.

²In the Western societies particularly in the United States, these have accelerated the trend of spirituality.

Most recently, some sociologists of religion have turned their interests to studying some concepts related to religious behaviour such as spirituality and religiosity and their connection with factors like well-being, illness, aging and some traits of personalities (McGuire, 2003, 2008; Backford, 2003; Roof, 2001). However, these studies have suffered from several shortcomings such as the vagueness of concepts, absence of appropriate theoretical framework, and weakness in generalization, failure in analyzing religious phenomena both individually and collectively and failure in understanding the interrelated factors that have played significant roles in the construction of this phenomenon.

Having analyzed the viewpoints of the above groups, this study argues that using religious identity as a holistic approach to understand the religious phenomenon has either been neglected or misused by many researchers. It is also argued that religious identity would constitute an entrance to trace the complicated dimensions of religious phenomena such as the connection between the popular and official religions, religious experiences, spirituality and issues such as the syncretism of identity. It also clearly demonstrates the relationship between the agent and the structure including the relationship between personal religious narratives and master narratives.

In the meantime, prominent scholars such as Al-Faruqi, 1988; al-Attas, 1993; Elmessiri, 2006; Hussein, 2006 and post-colonialist scholars such as Said, 1978, 1993; Bhabha, 2004 have drawn our attention to the Eurocentric paradigms that deal with agency and structure in understanding the social psychological dimensions of postcolonial culture generally and the Islamic cultural identity and its socio-historical contexts in particular. According to these scholars, Western paradigms have imposed the Western authority, power, hegemony, discrimination, inequality, actions and their

master narratives over the non-Western cultures. Also the adoption of Western categories, concepts and methods and other terminologies has led to the projection, internalization and rationalization, identification of Western cultural world point of view while employing a negative connotation when dealing with their culture through negation, displacement and reaction formation. Following this line of argument, Elmessiri (2008: 8) states:

Some biases are explicit and conscious, others are implicit and unconscious. Conscious bias is that of someone sees the world through it then propagates it and mobilizes in its favor. Unconscious bias, by contrast, happens when someone internalizes an epistemological system with all its premises and priorities and unconsciously sees the world only through it (8).

The present study, therefore, takes a critical point of view towards the previous theories that have dealt with identity and religion by arguing among others that these previous theories have focused excessively on the cognitive dimension of measuring identity giving little attention to the narrative side of the problem specifically the religious narrative. The present study adopts an integrated meta-theoretical approach to construct religious identity by including moral-ethical narrative identity, self-reflexivity theories and autobiographical narrative identity.

Accordingly, this study seeks to increase our consciousness of the central role played by Islamic narrative in the discursive practices of Muslims in their everyday lives. It also seeks to show how the historical Islamic narratives provide a rich ideological framework for constructing the religious identity of the agents. Again, the study seeks to show how these Islamic master narratives intersect with personal narratives of the Islamic believers. The argument in this part aims to give initial insight of Islamic narratives as master narratives, the sources of Islamic narratives, the

function of Islamic master narratives, the intersection between personal and master narratives and how the Muslim agents internalize the Islamic narratives in their personal religious experiences and performances.

Theoretically, Islamic religious narratives could enhance the possibility of shedding light on complicated issues related to the complexity of religion in everyday life. They could lead to bridging the gap between religion as a system of beliefs and rules and religious practices as transcendent experiences of ordinary people. This is in accordance with the Islamic point of view that considers Islam to consist of major dimensions namely *'aqīdah* (faith), *'amal* (practices) and *ihsān* (realization). In other words, Islamic religious narratives could clarify the relationship between scripture, tradition, reason and transcendent experience.

Empirically, the study resorts to an autobiographical analysis of stories (life stories and religious stories) and discursive religious practices in order to construct a religious identity. This methodology attempts to reveal the transformation of religious identity through the life span of ordinary people (past, present and even future) and explicitly clarifies its implications on the social actors. Also, it contextually explains their identity in relation to master narratives.

Hence, the current study is to stress on the construction of religious identity among Palestinians along this line. Palestinians are the indigenous people of Palestine which is culturally Arabic and largely, but not wholly, a Muslim land. Part of its population is also formed by Christian Arabs who share the same culture and heritage as the Palestinian Muslims. The Palestinians share the same language and culture with the rest of the Arab world of which they have been a part of centuries (Farsoun, 2004; Khalidi, 2009).

The question that remains to be explored and responded is thus: how do Palestinians utilize religious narratives and practices on the level of action and discourse to consolidate their religious identity? The following section in this chapter expands the nature and themes of this question.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are few studies which have thoroughly examined the way religious identity is constructed and developed (Ammerman, 2003; McGuire, 2008; Smith, 2007). However, there is no study that focuses on the way religious identity is enacted within the Palestinian society. More specifically, most of the studies investigating the role of religious identity tend to examine the connection between religion and other self-identities such as political identity and ethnic identity. In short, the literature regarding religious identity can be described as an organic inconclusive body of work.

Indeed, more recent researches on religious identity have mainly focused on the margin or outer circle of religious identity. The majority of these works has attempted to combine religious identity with national and ethnic identities (Mi'ari, 2009; Khalidi, 2009; Verkuyten, 2010; Kinnvall, 2004). These studies, therefore, analyze religious identity as a salience of conflict between groups or within the same group who hold different narratives (Hammack, 2008; Peek, 2005; Ysseldyk, 2010; Aziz, 2010; Hogg, 2010). The prevailing studies have also ignored analysis of religious identity as a set of beliefs, practices and transcendent experiences. Moreover, previous theoretical frameworks have not determined the relationship between religious identity and the overall identity. Much of this literature, therefore, sheds little light on the various definitions or theories of identity. Hence, religious narrative stories are still in need of a theoretical framework that discusses the way religious

narrative stories shape our whole life particularly in the case of trajectory and at the level of a person's worldview.

The majority of these research works (Bell, 2009; Griffith, 2001; Sanders, 1998; Fisherman, 2004) has also followed the Erikson and Marcia's paradigm of identity development among other paradigms introduced and suggested by various scholars and theoreticians. This excessive focus on cognitive methods and affirmed religious belief systems has neglected religious experiences, emotions, spirituality, embodiment and the everyday religious practices of people.

Furthermore, these paradigms have not given answers to such questions of how common actors construct their religious identities and the stages which might influence this construction. Previous paradigms do not show the reflection of the daily habits in the discursive formation of religious identity. The previous theoretical frameworks have neglected the way master narratives and dominant discourses constrain and enable the personal construction of religious meaning.

This study, on the other hand, provides a *meta-theoretical* analysis of paradigms with the aim of analyzing the religious narratives and discursive practices of the religious identity among the ordinary (common) people in Palestine. The analysis of paradigms yields information about the relationships between the heterogeneity of the narrative identity perspective and discursive practices of religious identity. In order to understand the way religious identity is produced and negotiated by the actors, the study traces the religious narratives (continuity and discontinuity of the actor through analyzing the life story and the relationship between these religious narratives and other master narratives).

On the level of Palestinian context, there is a crucial need to offer an empirical study that diagnoses the reality of everyday religion of people and how this reality is

constructed, produced, negotiated and reflected in subjective religious experiences. The study will serve at various levels: a) uncovering the religious map of individuals in order to interpret and to understand the religious behaviours of actors, b) understanding the latent issues regarding religious actors and their life styles, c) enhancing our interpretations to formulate a model regarding religious actors and d) shedding light on the consciousness of the policy maker to take into account the sensitivity of religious discourse and practices of actors in their decision-making process.

This study is driven by the motive that is based on the Islamisation of the theoretical framework, terminologies and concepts related to religious narratives through integrating, modifying, changing and creating new themes. Such a motive has the following aims: a) to make the readers conscious of the peculiarity of Islamic religious narrative and its cultural grounds, b) to prevent from improper use of methodology, theoretical frameworks and terminology and c) to enhance the power of interpretation by relying on reliable Islamic narrative sources such as the Qur'ānic narratives, the prophetic narratives and so on.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In the light of the aforementioned background and analysis of the related works regarding religion and religious identity, this study, hence, has a number of objectives to achieve which can be stated as follows:

Firstly, to conceptualize new themes regarding religious narrative identity through metatheoretical strategies. These new themes will be highly conscious of the Islamic point of view.

Secondly, to investigate the process of developing a religious identity among Muslims in Palestine. Particularly, it aims to investigate the role that religion plays in the life of the actors. The study will explore the way in which the religious identity may be questioned, redefined and re-worked discursively in the context of practices.

Thirdly, to examine the relationship between personal narratives and a master narrative and the way this dialectic relationship provides access to social production of religious identity of the actors either on the level of dynamic engagement of personal narratives with master narratives or the individual deviations from all the master narratives.

Fourthly, to explore the varieties of religious experiences among Palestinians and its role in consolidating their religious identity.

Fifthly, to explore the relationships between Muslim religious stories and their life course trajectories.

Finally, to study how Palestinians use various forms of material practices to maintain and sustain their religious identity. Many people resort to religious appliances and materials such as prophetic medicine, reciting and reading Qur'ān, blessings and spells for healing, prosperity, security and other apparatus to improve their well-being. This study attempts to unveil these issues and show how these are associated with their narrative identity.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the above objectives, the study poses a set of specific questions to be answered which can be stated as follows:

- i. How do Palestinians construct their religious identity in everyday life?

- ii. How do individual autobiographical (religious, secular) narratives intersect with broader (master) cultural narratives?
- iii. Do people use a number of different religious narratives to express the meaning of their life experiences and to explain trajectories of life?
- iv. How do Palestinians use various forms of religious practices (performance, emotions) to maintain or sustain their religious identity?
- v. How do Palestinians experience and reflect the divine power in their everyday life?

1.5 EXPECTED OUTCOME

A new paradigm in understanding Islamic religious phenomena especially Islamic religious narratives which takes into consideration the peculiarity of Muslim and Islamic contexts and congregates the intersection among religious narrative, identity narrative and social practices by reconstructing the autobiographical narratives of ordinary people (past, present and future).³ In particular, it can fill the gap in the field of the religious study in Palestine. Many transformations have occurred in the religious field in Palestine with issues related to religiosity, religious culture, religious market or religious behaviour in general. However, these changes in the religious field are rarely distinguished by sociologists and anthropologists in Palestine. Hence, understanding the religious narrative of ordinary people would be a threshold of understanding the religious phenomena in Palestine and of discerning the transformations that take place within the Palestinian daily life.

³ The holistic approach of this paradigm would allow a better understanding of the implicit and explicit meanings of religious narratives and other master narratives.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides a meta-theoretical analysis of paradigms including eclectic theories of narratives and their implications for identity, in general and construction of religious narrative identities, in particular. These theories cover the theory of autobiographical memory, moral-ethical theories, sociological theories (self-reflexivity theories) and lived religious paradigm.

The study of the narrative identity constitutes an entrance to expand on the complicated issues of religious behaviours such as religious experiences, religious emotions, materiality, embodiment and spirituality which connect the social contexts and daily lives of ordinary people.

Adopting the narrative identity approach to analyze the discursive practices of religious identity offers the possibility to dismantle the dichotomy between the agent and structure in a theory⁴.

Methodologically, analyzing autobiographical narratives may offer a helpful metaphor for understanding the nature of religious identity and human behaviour, what is shaping this behaviour, the context of the story we are born into and the stories we tell about ourselves and the relationship of the religious actor with the Divine.

Utilizing a life story approach to reconstruct the narrative identity provides us with clear maps about transformations that have occurred on the social actors. This approach also provides an analytical tool to interpret the critical points of every

⁴ In this regard, Ammerman (2003) states that "Identity needs to be understood as structured by existing rules and schemes, constrained by the existing distribution of resources and powers, and they were also malleable in the everyday reality of moving across the institutional contexts and among symbolic words" (Ammerman, 2003:212). Consequently, employing the religious narrative approach solves the dichotomy in understanding the religious phenomena on the level of a theoretical framework such as the secular theory and function theory or when it deals with central religious concepts such as religiousness, spirituality and individual and collective religions. The researcher thus argues that religious identity theory may participate in understanding the religious phenomenon in a holistic way.

episode, that is, every turning point in our lives has one or more plots. The study seeks to know the significance of a plot or different plots on the construction of religious map among social actors and how these plots are accompanied by actor's rite of passage. The present study also will examine Muslim religious identity by utilizing a new metatheorizing approach which also includes Islamic narrative sources. This will provide the researcher with a more integrated approach to investigate the construction of religious identity.

Like other societies, the Palestinian society has been influenced by developments such as globalization and multicultural interactions. Indeed, these transitions and technology driven global cultures have generated the problem for identity and on the level of beliefs, values and meanings. The metaphor of globalization leads to an increase in conflicting religious claims and the predicament at the level of religious identification, religious practices and religious ethical claims.

This research also attempts to understand the religious narrative in an Islamic context. It is noteworthy to mention that the religious experiences of a Muslim are totally different from the religious narratives of Judeo-Christians. The religious narrative in Islamic contexts has been neglected for a long time thereby depriving the Islamic literature from pivotal domains that contributes to the comprehension of the daily lives among Muslim religious actors.⁵

Applying the integrated religious narrative approach to the Islamic context achieves three objectives: First, reconstructing terms mentioned in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, as well as the terms from Muslim thinkers, such as the concepts of *Ihsān*,

⁵This neglect has obstructed answers to crucial questions in Muslim societies such as what the transformations of the religious landscape in societies are and why some societies have the tendency to adopt Sufism while others adopt the ideal or orthodoxies of Islam. This neglect by religious studies has also ignored the relation between the transformations in Muslim societies (individually and culturally) and the projects of modernity and post-modernity.

Īmān and so on. Second, constructing new concepts from religious actors as ordinary religious people may understand Islam differently from religious scholars; and third, integrating Islamic concepts with other theories in accordance with Islamic ideology as proposed by some scholars such as Shariati, 1979; al-Faruqi, 1981; Ahmed, 1986, 2002. Farooqui (2009) also focuses on the importance of combining Islamic ideology, Islamic thought and empirical knowledge to reconstruct an Islamic sociology (Farooqui, 2009: 175-176).

Concerning Muslim *Ummah*, this study offers an epistemological prelude around the religious phenomena, particularly in the field of sociology of religion. This is carried out by recognizing the map of religious phenomena in Islam and the predictions of these transformations on Muslim's religious identity in the future. Therefore, this research hopes to construct a new paradigm regarding religious identity in an Islamic context.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Personal Narratives: According to Maynes (2008), a personal narrative refers to “stories emerging from individual life experiences over time and, in particular, social, cultural and historical settings. These stories offer insights into human agency as seen from the inside out, that is, they can bridge the analytical gap between the outside positional ties and interior worlds and between the social and the individual worlds. They allow scrutiny of key subjective dimensions of motivation - emotions, desires, accumulated wisdom, acquired associations and meanings, clouded judgments and psychic makeup - all of which are the products of a lifetime of experiences.

Master Narratives: In the current study, the researcher views master narratives as overarching stories or cultural storylines shared by a community of individuals in a

specific cultural milieu. They are communal sense making structures that are constantly available to individuals and effectively guiding and shaping the stories they tell. Master narratives are dominant stories and thus enjoy a degree of power and privilege in a given context.

Religious Narratives: Religious narratives are all religious and spiritual stories that are woven in and out of daily lived experiences through the life course. These religious stories go beyond beliefs and belong to diverse religious domains such as sacred forces, ideas, events with meaning, location, and/or value beyond the human transcendent significance and actions such as religious experiences, religious representations and religious performances.

Religious Narrative Identity: Religious narrative identity is defined as a multi-layered religious narrative that covers beliefs, practices and religious transcendences enacted by agents through the engagements of personal narratives with master narratives. Religious narrative identity is a complex process constructed and reconstructed across the life course and scripted in individual's trajectories and emplotment through personal past and present everyday life with an imagined future to provide meaning, continuity, unity and integrative functions to the individual's own development and his/her relationship with the ultimate sacred.

Religious transcendence: Religious transcendence serves to relate people to the ultimate condition of human existence. The idea of transcendence implies an ultimate context, beyond other contexts, that provides terminal and cosmic significance. "To transcend" means to go beyond apparent reality and everyday life of an ordinary human being.

Trajectories of life: Trajectories of life indicate "the long-term pattern of stability and change, which usually involve:

a) Life events: significant occurrences involving relatively abrupt changes that may produce serious and long-lasting effects; b) Turning points: life events that produce a lasting shift in the trajectory of the life course; c) Multiple transitions: changes in roles and statuses that represent a distinct departure from prior roles and statuses and turning point stability” (Elder, 1985: 32).

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

There are several limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed regarding the study. First, on the level of the sample: a) since it is impractical to select a random sample in qualitative approach, the sample of the study will be selective i.e. by selecting fourteen informants that takes into account distribution of the age and genders, b) since it is difficult to conduct the study in all Palestinian districts (West Bank, Gaza strip and in the Diaspora), the current study will be conducted in the South West Bank (Hebron and Bethlehem cities, towns and refugee camps). Consequently, the results of this study might not be generalized beyond the sample, c) since the study focuses on construction of religious narrative identity in everyday life, the informants will be ordinary people and not the conservative religious orientations or the non-religious people.

Second, on the level of methodology, although the quantitative design allowed the research to attain a larger sample size, this methodology is more limited to in-depth interviews through utilizing social life story interviews. The qualitative approach is being utilized in this study because a) the study deals with narratives on both of the theoretical and methodological levels, b) the religious narratives impose utilizing qualitative design due to the complexity of constructing religious phenomena’s issues such as religious experiences, the representation of religious