

Social Dimension, Religious Conversion and American Women Converts

Zulfi Zumala Dwi Andriani (Corresponding author)
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Program
Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Surabaya Indonesia

Budi Darma
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Program
Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Surabaya Indonesia

Pratiwi Retnaningdyah
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Program
Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Surabaya Indonesia

Abstract:- Religious conversion is drifted by two dimensions; personal and social dimensions. This research focuses on the social dimension of religious conversion, which emphasizes on pre-conversion and post-conversion. The object of the research is the memoir, *Through Knowledge I found my peace after September 11, 2001* written by Sakinah Alafiah Cardona. David Snow and Richard Machalek's sociology of conversion model applied in analysing memoir. The research finding is the role of the 9/11 event in the conversion process, equality in Islam, and advocate's role have a significant influence in the religious conversion process. Social dimension also influences post-conversion changes, such as wearing a Hijab, the changes of social identity, and Muslim community engagement. In post-conversion, some converts have to face never-ending struggle and learning to cope with some social context changes.

Keywords:- Social Dimension, Religious Conversion, Memoir.

I. INTRODUCTION

The event of 9/11 created a significant impact on America, especially the relationship between America and Islam. According to Curiel, there are four significant impacts of the 9/11 event in the American social context. Firstly, it is a political reawakening in which Islam is getting violence and hatred of prejudice in most Western countries. Since 9/11, Muslims' presence in Europe and America has become a political concern particularly related to the policy of war on terrorism. The second impact is interfaith and curriculum outreach. Some Muslim groups initiate this program to engage an interfaith program with Jewish and Christian and some schools and universities in America. One of the programs is the Buxton Initiative; this program was initiated by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and partnered with the Jewish community. Thirdly is the impact on media; it can be seen from a load of news about Islam in media. Although there were some misperceptions about Islam in media, it also plays an important role in giving an alternative picture of Islam. The last impact is conversion to Islam (Curiel, 2015: 51-52).

The phenomenon of religious conversion has increased in the United States, following the events of 9/11, with an estimated 20,000 people each year with a larger number of

women than men. This data is based on a survey conducted by the Council on American Islamic Relations in 2006. The issue of religious conversion in the United States is a paradox since many women converted to Islam than men. Some academic researches indicated that two - thirds of converts to Islam are female (Wohlrab-Sahr 1999b; Wagtendonk 1994; Haleem 2003). since many assumptions in the western context, especially in the United States, Muslim women are not equal to men. However, on the contrary, some religious converts to Islam in the United States are women. There are some reasons women convert to Islam. The first one is married to Muslim men. This reason comes in the first position of the religious conversion of women. The second one assumes that Islam is a kind of women liberation from Western materialism; some are not comfortable enough in the United States culture, which is related to consumerism, dating, and drinking alcohol (Van Nieuwkerk, 2006: 35).

Wohlrab-Sahr (1999: 32) identified three reasons why women convert to Islam; this identification is based on her research on women converts from the biographical case studies in the Dutch and the United States. The identification of women converts reasons are sexuality and gender issues, social mobility and ethnicity, and nationality. The reason for sexuality and gender issue deals with women's backward experiences related to sexuality and gender, such as violence based on gender, divorce, and sexual harassment. This issue leads some women to convert to Islam, as most converts consider that conversion to Islam is a problem solution regarding women's boundaries. The second reason is social mobility. This second reason is the experience of women's failure to gain social and Economic matters, and Islam is associated as an answer to the social problems in the country, such as criminality and drugs. The last reason is ethnicity and nationality, and it means that converting to Islam brings a new kind of belonging and community into existence. From the three indications of religious conversion reason proposed by Wohlrab - Sahr, it can be regarded that religious conversion is a complex process. It is related to the internal and external factors. The internal factors are related to the psychological point. The external factor is related to the social problems that triggered a convert to choose Islam as the solution for their social issue.

In the late 20th century, several converts in the United States were coming of Muslim immigrants and mixed marriages between white Anglo - American and Muslim immigrants (Bowen, 2015: 204). In the following age, the critical issue to be highlighted is the reasons of converts to Islam are interested in cultivating peace, justice, and brotherhood (2015: 3), as well as it happens to some American women who are getting interested in Islam by researching topic about Islam both reading and studying the Qur'an, learning about the cultural and political history of Islam including studying variety texts of Sufism (Haddad et al., 2006: 47). According to Patterson (2006), in terms of Islam's encounter, 38% of converts were principally influenced by a book about Islam, 32% by a fellow Muslim, and 12% by marriage.

Several studies on religious conversion have been conducted, one of which has been conducted by Edwin Starbuck. It was the research about the relationship between adolescence development and conversion. Starbuck revealed that conversion is characterized by more or less sudden changes of character from evil to goodness, from sinfulness to righteousness, and from indifference to spiritual insight and activity. From Starbuck's perspective, religious conversion internalizes mental and spiritual, resulting in conversion character changes (Starbuck, 1899). Another research was research by Dina Mohamed's Conversion Experiences of three White American Muslim Male; The impact Centering and Decentering Forces (Eletreby, 2010) examines three American white males from the perspective of postcolonialism and blended to feminist theory and Islamic epistemology. The research resulted that these participants experienced marginalization due to non - white aligned or non - masculine aligned characteristics prior to their conversion to Islam. Her research findings also revealed how the participants' individual characteristics were moved out of a position of marginalization within the American Muslim community, causing a sense of social comfort. Finally, the research found that the participants shared what it is to be American Muslim post 9/11, which privileges whiteness, masculinity, and secularism. The similarity to this article is the context of religious conversion, while the difference is that the previous research examines religious conversion, which focuses on psychology. In contrast, this research focuses on the social dimension and focuses on the experience of religious conversion by American women convert.

Each convert has different experiences dealing with their conversion; some then recorded their experience in creative writing such as memoir. According to Plummer (Taylor, 2009), a memoir has been proliferating in western culture generally, due primarily to two factors – the increase in opportunities to speak and be heard afforded by technology and the normalization of self - help, and therapy. The memoirs of conversion also become a tool to write about self - narrative related to religious conversion. As Cardona tells in her memoir, her writing's objective is to share her long journey in finding Islam and claiming that Islam is not a religion, which is related to violence and terrorism (Cardona, n.d, 2012). Meanwhile, this article will analyse the religious conversion, which focuses on the social dimension primarily focusing on

motifs of conversion and some conversion changes in Sakinah Alafiah Cardona's memoir, *Through Knowledge I found My Peace after September 11, 2001*.

This article begins with discussing the overview of religious conversion, namely from the social dimension perspective. It follows with an explanation of the methodology used in this research. The following section analyses the memoir *Through Knowledge I found My Peace after September 11, 2001* written by Sakinah Alafiah Cardona. The last section is the conclusion.

This research is qualitative. This research's object is in the form of quotes and sentences taken from memoirs written by Sakinah Alafiah Cardona's *Through Knowledge I found My Peace after September 11, 2001*. Collecting the data is reading memoirs comprehensively and classifying quotes and sentences according to research objectives. Which is related to the social dimension in the pre-conversion and post-conversion. To make it easier for me to organize data, I differentiate data based on two topics, namely pre-conversion and post-conversion.

In analysing the data, I apply the narrative inquiry approach; firstly, by reading the memoir many times, the data is already in hand to be analyzed. I began to analyze the motifs of religious conversion in pre-conversion and some post-conversion changes from a social dimension perspective.

II. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Through Knowledge, I found my peace after September 11 2001, is a memoir which was written by Sakinah-Alafiah Cardona. In her memoir, she writes some experiences that triggered her inner desire to search for peace. Some stories narrated about her youth, marriage, military life, and conversion to Islam as an Army wife. Cardona was a military wife who stayed in Clarksville, Tennessee, considered a military town. Cardona came from Puerto Rico, and Spanish is her first language. The memoir was begun from Cardona's story, who gave a speech in the "First Women's Convention" in the Islamic Center of Tennessee. She told the story about her conversion process to Islam, which then inspired her to write it in the form of a memoir so that people can take some lessons from her story.

Before being a Muslim, Cardona was raised in a Catholic family, and fifteen years later, she was baptized as a Mormon. In seeking spiritual questions, Cardona visited many churches throughout the years, but she felt that her life was not completed yet. The 9/11 event had changed Cardona and family's life when finally, she met Muslims and had the opportunity to spend time with their family. Cardona tried to get information about Islam in the library, but the information did not satisfy her until she learned a lot about Islam from her co-worker. Cardona learned many things about Islam, which attracted her so much. Finally, In November 2003, Cardona converted to Islam.

➤ *The Motifs of the Social Dimension in pre-Conversion*

Theoretically, religious conversion, in the beginning, is the study that is related to the psychological aspect because it relates to the development and radical change of a person personally. William James, in his book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, defined conversion as to be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual, or sudden, by which a self-hither to divided and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. In this work, William James used two keywords in explaining the conversion process, namely religion and religious experience. Based on the pragmatism theory, James defines religion as a human's feelings, actions, and experiences privately. While religious experience is also subjective, this is related to one's experience and appreciation of religion (James, 1902). It can be inferred that, according to William James, religion is very personal, and this is related to the experience and consciousness of each individual.

Furthermore, Religious conversion is also motivated by social factors, such as mixed marriage of different religions. This factor becomes the first motivation of conversion, as Wohlrab-Sahr stated, who distinguishes three reasons for conversion, notably conversion to Islam; gender and sexuality, social mobility and nationality, and ethnicity. Gender and sexuality deal with the answer that Islam provides equality between men and women and Islam positively affects women. Social mobility is related to Islam, provides an alternative way to counter social problems in society, such as drugs and criminality. The last is nationality and ethnicity, in which conversion to Islam brings unity among different ethnicities and nations (Starbuck, 1899).

➤ *Islam and the Event of 9/11*

The event of 9/11 was a turning point where conversion to Islam was one of its effects, especially in America. Curiel (2015) revealed that the history of Islam in America could be divided into many periods and immigration waves, but 9/11 has changed Islam's face on the broader community, especially in the United States. The event of 9/11 changed the perception and the identity of American Islam more radically than any other events. In a 2007 poll of Muslim- Americans released by the Pew Research Center, 53 percent said that their lives more difficult in the years after 9/11. Furthermore, the biggest problem facing US Muslims respondents said was discrimination, racism, prejudice, and being viewed as a terrorist. Following those facts, on the other hand, the event of 9/11 made some American Muslims flock open up more to American society; they made a counter-narrative in the media by making some video campaign uploaded on Youtube to show that Islam is a peaceful one. The event of 9/11 was also a turning point in which many American people then wanted to know about Islam.

The event of 9/11 was the beginning time in which Islam is widely known by the American people. It became a period for many people to get to know Islam more and learn more about Islam. In the context of the conversion process, some

potential converts who are searching and getting trapped on spiritual questions were getting to know the religion of Islam. Besides that, after 9/11, American Muslims began to open up to American society by campaigning that Islam was a religion of peace.

Sakinah Alafalah Cardona's *Through Knowledge I found My Peace after September 11, 2001* mentioned in her memoir that the event of 9/11 impression on her memory and marked the first beginning she wanted to know about Islam. On the other hand, the event of 9/11 can also be seen from the social perspective relating to America, especially related to Islam. Because the event of 9/11 has brought big changes both within the Muslim community and in the American public's consciousness and response (Cesari, 2010; 28).

The year is now 2013, and many things have occurred since that frightful autumn day in New York. Many countries live in recession, leaving some without jobs and governments scrambling to find solutions to problems. Revolts like those of the Arab Spring and the numerous shooting massacres happening around the United States are Prime examples of the changes that are occurring worldwide (Cardona; 26).

All of the above has happened after September 11, 2001, as if a big lesson was trying to be taught. Contrary of what anyone expected many people keep converting to Islam. perhaps the encoded curiosity and desire of humanity will lead to a search of spirituality or consideration for the amazing result of creation? (Cardona; 26)

Cardona told in her memoir that the event of 9/11 had led her into the curiosity of Islam. Cardona found that there was a miss perception of Islam in America. She believes that religion will not command its people to commit violence and to cause damage on earth. Likewise, Cardona believed that there are several types of Muslims, some of them who carry out religious orders, and some do not. Cardona insisted on learning about Islam from the trust sources and getting a complete understanding of the Islamic religion concept. Although to get a reference about Islam is not easy for Cardona at the moment. Cardona is one of the American women who converted to Islam after 9/11 when Islam began to develop rapidly while at the same time increasing Islamophobia in America.

The increasing number of immigrants who came from Islamic countries to America and the increasing number of white people who converted to Islam indicated that the events of 9/11 had a social dimension to the development of Islam in America. Along with the increasing number of Muslims in America, Americans' chance to direct contact with Muslims is higher. This can be used as a way to represent that Islam is not merely the same as what is reported by the media that Islam is related to terrorists. Likewise, with the role of memoir writing written by Cardona.

➤ *Equality in Islam*

Islam is often considered to be Arabia and the Middle East religion; this assumption comes because most Muslims are people of Arab origin. Willow, in her memoir, also assumed that Islam was the religion of the Arabs. When the

perpetrators of the bombings at the event of 9/11 were considered terrorists, it was later discovered that the perpetrators were Muslims, the assumption that Islam was terrorists. Moreover, because Islam was first revealed in the Arabian Peninsula, there is an assumption that Islam is Arabic, so there is a perception that is formed that Islam is Arabic.

In her memoir, Cardona expressed her disapproval of the war against terrorism, a policy proposed by President Bush as an effect of the event of 9/11. According to Cardona, the war against terrorists is useless; it is better to improve the American state's economy, protecting its citizens, including the army. Based on Cardona, terrorists can never be killed, and once they are fought, the others will still reappear.

Cardona mentioned that what we need is peace and respect for everyone's belief since she believed that a feeling of peace could build freedom in this world. It can be seen that Cardona's understanding of Islam was actually to reclaim that some terror events in the West did not have any relationship to any religion, including Islam. Cardona insisted that no religion would teach about making terror and destruction in this world. However, it is actually regarded as the interpretation of every religious believer toward their sacred text.

In her memoir, Cardona mentioned equality in Islam, which made her interested in learning more about Islam, and she finally decided to become a Muslim. Islam is related to Arabic or the Middle East, but Islam is revealed to the universe without seeing ethnicity, race, skin colour or gender. In Islam, every individual must be responsible for all of her/his actions in the world to God, and all humans have the same degree in God's eyes. This makes Cardona believe that Islam carries the idea of equality beyond everything, including the position as a woman.

I read that in Islam everybody is equal regardless of race, color or origin at birth. Which make me fell in love more and more with this peaceful religion (Cardona, pp 173).

The experience of women personally also influences the motives of religious conversion. Women have biological experience, which then influences their role in society. In terms of religion, women's position is sometimes underestimated because of male-dominated interpretation of the religious text as well in Islam (Faqihuddin, n.d., 2019). This perspective which then adopted in the vast western community, and the idea of Cardona about Muslim women. The moment in which Cardona met a Muslim family leaving moments that automatically undermine Cardona's assumptions about Islam that demean women.

I was surprised to know that a Muslim woman could work and wondered if she could choose her career? This was not what I knew about Muslim women. I heard that Muslim women were mistreated and submitted to a man, so then why is this man considerate to his wife? How come he always asks me if I can take care of his baby while he spends special moments with his wife alone? That's not what I heard in the news about a Muslim man. (Cardona, 149)

In the context of marriage, Cardona's assumption about Islam firstly is related to polygamy, and women are submissive to their husbands. However, then it also answered by her Muslim friend that women are acknowledged in Islam that a husband should provide the basic needs of a wife. This idea shocked Cardona, and she began to like Islam. Hadad added that conversion to Islam among American Muslim women has been very puzzling since most of the ideas about Islam among Americans are related to exploitation and suppression by Muslim men (Haddad et al., 2006). The assumptions that are developing in America are Muslim women relating to sensuality and abuse. It is believed that in most of the Western narrative, which is depicted in media, Islam is biased in terms of gender issues (Rahat Raja, 2014; 3-31). This assumption later inspired women in the West to include ideas about equality and liberalism among Muslim women. However, this fact is reversed by Cardona's experience when meeting with Muslim families.

The moment of encountering with Muslim family builds a new perspective on Cardona, especially about women's position in Islam. Cardona's first idea stated that Islam does not allow to work outside their home, but then this misassumption is clarified directly from the experience of encountering with the Muslim family. Cardona also thought that women in Islam are not allowed to go to school, but then her Muslim friend said that dozens of Muslim women become nurse, doctor, or academicians. Moreover, most of them can be active publicly.

What I never thought that I was going to learn in Islam is that women were equal to men (Cardona; 189)

In this context, there is a link between gender issues and religious conversion. Being a woman has a significant role in influencing Cardona to become a convert since she positions herself as a woman, and how Islam turns out to respect women's position both in the private and public sphere. Although often, there is still a misinterpretation of women's position in most of the Islamic religious texts.

➤ *The Role of Advocate*

One of the things that could be a catalyst conversion process based on finding in this research is the advocate's role. In the religious conversion, there was a moment that missionaries are seeking the potential convert. The missionary activity was done by some religions such as Islam and Christian. Those two religions are indicated as missionary religion, which could persuade people to believe on their truth. Rambo remarked that more than thirty- seven thousand missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are crisscrossing the street and road of cities, villages, and rural areas throughout the world (Rambo, 1993; 66). In terms of Rambo's conversion stages, the missionary activity was called by the advocate's nature. The advocate's nature was having an essential role in the conversion process since it could uncover the process of conversion explicitly.

In this research, the role of advocate also had contribution as catalyst in the conversion process. The meaning of advocate refers to an institution or person who has

a role in helping the potential convert in conversion. The role of advocate also entered the stage of the encounter, where the potential convert first began to get to know about Islam.

In her memoir, Cardona recounted the process of her first encountering Islam through the visit to her co-worker's home, who was Muslim. During the visit, Cardona seemed to see Islam in real life. Then Cardona began to study Islam from her co-worker and also through his wife. Besides learning about Islam, Cardona also saw directly how Muslims practice Islam in their daily lives.

When I went to their house I felt a sensation of peace that I have never before felt in my life. I met my co-worker's sister who just had a baby girl and later became my friend. We spent hours talking. I was fascinated with their way her husband was very considerate with her (Cardona; 148).

Rambo mentioned that the role of an advocate was crucial in the conversion process (Rambo, 1993). Advocate referred to someone or organization of specific religion which has to lead someone to convert. Advocate's missionary program could be in personal or public contact. In Cardona's memoir context, an advocate's role could be related to her Muslim friend, who was her co-worker in the workplace. Although Cardona's Muslim friend was not considered as the formal missionary program, the personal contact between Cardona and her friend could be including on advocate personal contact. The interaction between Cardona and her Muslim friends could offer the potential role model as Muslim and give the guidelines of living as Muslim. Furthermore, the interaction between Cardona and her friend could also confirm Islam in the real context, so that Cardona would have a better understanding of Islam.

➤ *The Changes of Social Dimension after Conversion*

Taking *Shahadah* and becoming a Muslim formally is not the end of the religious conversion process journey, but it is the first step of becoming Muslim. Cardona experienced post-conversion changes after passing the complicated spiritual journey of conversion, especially related to the social dimension perspective.

➤ *Wearing Hijab in the Work Place*

The issue of Hijab was also taking place in the discussion of religious conversion, especially for women. Cardona decided to wear Hijab after nine months of her conversion to Islam. The wearing of Hijab is related to the decision to perform the identity of Muslims publicly. Before wearing Hijab, Cardona faced the wrong impression that she was not a Muslim. Moreover, what Cardona understand about Hijab was only for a single woman, then she got more understanding that Hijab was the command from Allah.

The stage of consequences in the religious conversion process is associated with publicly performing the new religion. Cardona was working in the Catholic Church for Charity in the beginning period of her conversion. Cardona was not directly wearing the Hijab, but she began to wear a long skirt. After passing the stage commitment, not all converts were directly ready to perform their new religion directly, even

to their relatives. They tended to keep it secretly for moments until they were ready to announce it publicly.

The first day I wore the Hijab at my job it created chaos for everyone except for me. I was working with the Hispanic population in Nashville, Tennessee a place where I normally worked with nuns. Some of the new clients didn't want to talk to me because they thought that I didn't speak Spanish and were afraid of me because of the events of September 11. (Cardona; 235)

The issue of wearing Hijab is one of the consequences of being a Muslim among American converts, although the decision of wearing Hijab is the personal decision but it influences the social life of Cardona. Wearing Hijab means performing the Muslim identity publicly, and many people will recognize the Muslim identity easily. Each convert has to confront different responses from her colleagues related to decision of wearing Hijab and it needs a strong commitment to responding to it. Moreover, America's value that separated between religion and government also brings the issue of wearing Hijab became sensitive. Wearing Hijab is such a kind of performing religious identity in public. It is often associated with religious matter that leads to political issues such as the event of 9/11.

Fatima Koura's research (Koura, 2018; 125) on the Hijab and the American Workplace, through interviewing 35 women wearing Hijab in the United States, mentioned that there was the media's influence on shaping the perception of Muslim culture primarily related to the wearing Hijab in the work place. Moreover, the participants' reason for wearing Hijab in the workplace represented the autonomy in publicly expressing their religious identity. Although there was still a discrimination report on religious practice and the wearing of religious symbols in the workplace, this condition did not influence Muslim women to continue wearing Hijab.

The highlight of this part was the commitment, and the consequences of being Muslim in the conversion to Islam could be different for each convert and the strong commitment in wearing Hijab. Wearing Hijab in a social context is not only defined as a headcover for a Muslim woman, but it also becomes a social identity for Muslims.

➤ *National Identity and Religious Identity*

One of the consequences linked to conversion to Islam is the transformation of social identity. In Western discourse, the existence of Islam, especially following 9/11, was often still associated with violence and terrorism. It cannot be separated from the role of western media in representing Islam. Even Cardona in her memoir said that the western media is crueler than Westerners themselves to Islam. This affects increasing potential security threats to Muslims.

On the other hand, handling discrimination against Muslims related to alleged extremism has not become a priority government policy. Based on those facts, this indirectly affects the social identity of American Muslim women converts. They must have the ability to negotiate

between national identity as America and their religious identity as Muslims.

I always wondered if terrorist read the Qur'an. America is a beautiful country, maybe not the perfect one but a country with many opportunities. Americans participate in charities for other countries and are among the first to help countries in need. It is very sad that some Muslims that are given the opportunity to immigrate to America forgot the way our prophet taught us to behave in a foreign country in which we are supposed to respect their laws (Cardona; 242).

Cardona, based on their narrative in memoirs, narrated that they should contemplate their identity before conversion. On the other hand, they choose to become Muslims, which is a minority religion in America with negative experiences about the 9/11 event. It has influenced Cardona a lot to adjust between being a Muslim and being an American. In the end, Cardona created a third identity, which blended between being a Muslim and being an American. A third identity creates an identity for American Muslim women who are moderate and tolerant and still uphold American citizens' values.

➤ *Muslim Community Engagement*

The consequences stages in the conversion stage based on Lewis Rambo were that there were changes in the personal sphere and included in the social sphere. It means that religious conversion also influenced the changes of convert's social life. In the religious conversion process, the convert took most of her/his contemplating individually. However, after being a Muslim, the convert needed to dig out the Islam knowledge by assembling to other Muslims, gathering with other Muslims having an essential aspect for converts, as like as having a sister or brother in the same belief and value, which then built such kind of brotherhood and sisterhood in Islam. Above all, there was a time when convert wanted to learn more about Islamic religion and teaching from other Muslims.

Furthermore, being a Muslim in the Western people would have different oasis-like being Muslim in the country in which Islam is a majority religion. This condition influenced some converts to look for Muslim friends in order to get more understanding of Islam. Like what Cardona told in her memoir that after her conversion to Islam, she kept herself busy reading books about Islam, but she still felt that she had not been a Muslim entirely since she missed a community element.

We met next Sunday and I was finally able to be with sisters. Alhamdulillah! It was the most beautiful day that I had experienced after a long time. I met sisters from different nationalities. We used to take classes that discuss what Islam is all about and talked about many things. It was a different kind of conversation to what I used to having with my friends but the atmosphere felt like family (Cardona, 232)

Nevertheless, then Cardona found a Muslim women community in her region from the Mosque Imam's instructions. Cardona was thrilled that finally, she found a community in which she can discuss Islam more. Cardona could ask some questions which she had not understood to the

sisters in the community. Some sisters ran the community; some Muslim women from different nationalities gather in the mosque to discuss and study Islam, such as about Hijab or marriage life. The community was scheduled to regularly meet in the mosque to facilitate Muslim women having more discussions about Islam.

Furthermore, Cardona felt that she had a similar identity as a Muslim woman who made her more comfortable personally and socially by joining a community. Personally, Cardona had some Muslim women figure to be imitated, as a convert, Cardona still needed to develop her new identity as a Muslim. As it was stated by Erikson (1968), there are two ways to develop identity: exploration and commitment. It means that in developing identity as a Muslim, Cardona made the community as the place where she studied what to do, what to value, and how to behave as a Muslim.

They would either go to work or stay at home and when they talk about their marriage life it was as if it is like a dream. I wanted to have a life like that I wanted to feel those blessings (Cardona, 232).

Tajfel (1981) defined the social identity as the knowledge that one is a member of a group, one's feelings about group membership, and knowledge of the group's rank or status compared to another group. As a Muslim, Cardona was been transformed her identity both personally and socially into another social group. Since Islam also contained two identities; personal and social identities. socially, that is to become a collective identity together with other Muslims who represent a religious group with the same norms and values.

III. CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates that the Social dimension also has significance in the conversion process because social symptoms that occur in a community also stimulating the emotion of potential convert. In this study, 9/11 was a turning point in the changing American society looking at Islam both negatively and positively. Within the conversion framework, 9/11 provides a new discourse about Islam, where many Americans are curious about Islam. Moreover, one of the effects of 9/11 was conversion to Islam. In this article, the event of the 9/11 effect was seen in giving effect to potential convert, where Islam is more widely known in America. However, 9/11 also created ambiguous feelings on convert, because they are at the crossroads of identity between Islam and America. The social dimension in the conversion process is related to America, which adheres to secularism. It means that the state does not interfere with its people's religion, and the state guarantees freedom of it. So that various Muslim sects can live peacefully side by side in America. This also has an effect on the potential convert to Islam which guarantees its freedom to learn about other religions. Because America adheres to secular ideology, the state does not regulate American people's religion, so the opportunity to convert to Islam is wide open for anyone in America including white women.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Al-Qwidi, M. Understanding the stages of conversion to Islam: The voices of British converts. The University of Leeds. 2002
- [2]. Bowen, P. D. A history of conversion to Islam in the United States. Brill, 2015.
- [3]. Cardona, S. A. (n.d.). Through Knowledge I found My Peace After September 11, 2001. Lulu.com.
- [4]. Cesari, J. (Ed.). Muslims in the West after 9/11: Religion, politics, and law. Routledge, 2010.
- [5]. Curiel, J. Islam in America. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
- [6]. Eletteby, D. M. Conversion experiences of three white American Muslim males: The impact of centering and decentering forces. Chapman University. 2010
- [7]. Erikson, E. Youth: Identity and crisis. *New York, NY: W.* 1968
- [8]. Esposito, J. L. *What everyone needs to know about Islam.* Oxford University Press. 2011
- [9]. Faqihuddin, A. K. (n.d.). Qiraah Mubaadalah tafsir Progresif untuk Keadilan Gender dalam Islam. 2019
- [10]. Ghanea Bassiri, K.. A history of Islam in America: From the new world to the new world order. Cambridge University Press. 2010
- [11]. Graff, H. J., Mackinnon, A., Sandin, B., & Winchester, I. Literacy, Religion, Gender, and Social History: A Socio-Cultural History for the 21st Century. *Interchange*, 34 2003 pp 117–122.
- [12]. Haddad, Y. Y., Smith, J. I., & Moore, K. M.. *Muslim women in America: The challenge of Islamic identity today.* Oxford University Press. 2006
- [13]. Hermansen, M.. Keeping the faith: Convert Muslim mothers and the transmission of female identity in the West. *Women Embracing Islam: Gender and Conversion in the West*, 250–274. 2006
- [14]. James, W. The variety of religious experience. Library of America. 1902
- [15]. Koura, F.. Navigating Islam: The Hijab and the American workplace. *Societies*, 2018 pp. 125
- [16]. McGinty, A. M.. Becoming Muslim: Western women's conversions to Islam. Springer. 2006
- [17]. Mernissi, F . The veil and the male elite: A feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam. Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. 1991
- [18]. Rahat, Raja.. Western Women and Islam: Embracing and Negotiating Muslim Identity. *Policy Perspectives*, 11(1), 3. <https://doi.org/10.13169/polipers.11.1.0003> 2014
- [19]. Rambo, L. R.. Understanding religious conversion. Yale University Press. 1993
- [20]. Starbuck, E. D. The psychology of religion: An empirical study of the growth of religious consciousness (Vol. 38). Walter Scott. 1899.
- [21]. Steinberg, M. . Writing Literary Memoir: Are We Obligated to Tell the Real Truth?. *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction*, 1(1), 142-147. 1999
- [22]. Stromberg, P. G. Language and self-transformation: A study of the Christian conversion narrative (Vol. 5). Cambridge University Press. 2008
- [23]. Tafjel, H. Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology. CUP Archive, Cambridge. 1981
- [24]. Taylor, J . Rich sensitivities: An analysis of conflict among women in feminist memoir. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie*, 46(2), 2009 pp. 123–141.
- [25]. Van Nieuwkerk, K. . Women embracing Islam: Gender and conversion in the West. University of Texas Press. 2006
- [26]. Wohlrab-Sahr, M. Konversion zum Islam in Deutschland und den USA. Campus Verlag. 1999