Black men, religiosity and desistance: exploring Islam, desistance and identity

Shona Robinson-Edwards and Craig Pinkney

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the experiences of Ibrahim, an ex-offender who has embraced Islam. Ibrahim professes Islam to be the influential element to his desistance process. This study explores Ibrahim's journey, emphasising and reflecting upon youth; criminality and religiosity. Much of the current research relating to Black men and offending is limited to masculinity, father absence, gangs and criminality. The role of religiosity in the lives of offenders and/or ex-offenders is often overlooked. The authors suggest that identity, religiosity and desistance can raise a host of complexities while highlighting the unique challenges and benefits experienced by Ibrahim, following the practice of religion.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper took a qualitative, ethnographic approach, in the form of analysing and exploring Ibrahim's personal lived experience. The analysis of semi-structured interviews, and reflective diaries, utilising grounded theory allowed the formation of the following three core themes: desistance, religion and identity.

Findings – The findings within this paper identify an interlink between desistance, religion and identity. The role of religiosity is becoming increasingly more important in academic social science research. This paper highlights the complexities of all three above intersections.

Research limitations/implications – This paper explores the complexities of religiosity in the desistance process of Ibrahim. Research in relation to former gang members in the UK and the role of religiosity in their lives is fairly under-researched. This paper seeks to build on existing research surrounding gang, further exploring religiosity from a UK context.

Practical implications – Time spent with Ibrahim had to be tightly scheduled, due to the work commitments of both Ibrahim and the researcher. Therefore, planning had to be done ahead in an efficient manner.

Social implications – Researching the way individuals experience the world is a "growing phenomenon". This paper aimed to explore the lived experience of religiosity from the perspective of Ibrahim. However, it was important to not stereotype and label all Black males who have embraced Islam and desisted from crime. Therefore, this paper's intention is not to stereotype Black men, but to raise awareness and encourage further discussion surrounding the role of religiosity in the lives of ex-offenders'.

Originality/value – To the authors' knowledge, studies specifically focusing on the role of Islam in the life of an ex-offender are few and far between. Therefore, findings from this study are important to develop further understanding surrounding religiosity, offending and desistance. This study explores the lived experiences of Ibrahim, an former gang member and ex-offender who professes Islam to be a fundamental source to his desistance process.

Keywords Islam, Religiosity, Identity, Desistance, Gangs, Ex-offender

Paper type Research paper

Shona Robinson-Edwards is a Criminologist, a PhD Researcher and an Assistant Lecturer in Criminology at the Centre for Applied Criminology, Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK.
Craig Pinkney is a Criminologist, an Urban Youth Specialist and a Lecturer at the School of Education and Community, University College Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.

Introduction

Offenders and/or ex-offenders converting or reverting to a new religion is not a new concept. There are a number of individuals from different offending backgrounds who have embraced a new religion. The past decade has echoed this sentiment with a convicted serial killer, Levi Bellfield, allegedly converting to Islam (Barrett, 2016) and Karen Matthews, the mother of Shannon Matthews, allegedly embracing elements of Christianity (Thornton, 2016). The debate surrounding offenders and religion has been discussed within the media arena to some extent; however, heavily neglected in academic research. Having said this, research in relation to faith-based intervention has been explored to some extent (see Hallett and McCoy, 2015;

Johnson and Larson, 2003; Sumter and Clear, 1998). However, very little is written about the role of religion in the lives of ex-offenders and/or offenders, from a UK context.

Much understanding surrounding offenders comes in the form of prison writing. Autobiographies especially highlight a number of crucial elements surrounding life, upbringing, challenges and struggles. It is acknowledged that within the USA, many Black males have written about their prison experience (see Betts, 2010; Boothe, 2007). Arguably within the UK prison, writing is a smaller genre. The importance of giving individuals, some of whom are labelled deviant or criminal, a platform to express their lived experiences is crucial in social science research.

Understanding surrounding offenders and desistance is constantly expanding. Academics highlight different elements which are thought to be important in relation to desistance, such as gender (Giordano *et al.*, 2002); faith (Giordano *et al.*, 2008); and race and racialisation (Glynn, 2014). Equally, much has been written about religiosity (see Glock and Stark, 1965; Kewley *et al.*, 2015; Maruna *et al.*, 2006). This paper outlines the findings of an ethnographic investigation which looked at the narrative accounts of Ibrahim, a Black, male, ex-offender, professing Islam as a fundamental element to his desistance. It is important to note that a number of themes have emerged from the data; having said this, the following three themes are discussed in this paper: identity, religiosity and desistance.

Context

Ibrahim is a 38-year-old Black male, residing in the UK. Ibrahim is a former gang member to one of Birmingham's notorious street gangs. Ibrahim was heavily involved in a range of violent activity during the rise of this group in the 1990s. Ibrahim was chosen for this paper as he provided a rich and in-depth outlook into the role of religiosity both within and beyond the prison walls. Ibrahim's story provides a glimpse into this very complex and sometimes challenging position. Ibrahim has served many years behind bars, sentenced for offences ranging from assault, violent disorder, possession of a firearm, possession of a deadly weapon with ammunition, possession and intent to supply Class A drugs, robbery and armed robbery. Ibrahim first went to prison at the age of 16, serving three months in remand; again at 17 serving a 12-month sentence. At the age of 19, Ibrahim returned back to prison, spending a few months on remand and finally at the age of 24, Ibrahim received a nine years sentence, serving five and a half years.

Ibrahim's journey to Islam started with a discussion with a taxi driver about Islam, death and the grave. Ibrahim later begun to conduct further research into Islam. Islam maintained a part of Ibrahim's life; this was manifested in Ibrahim's practice of Islam, praying five times a day, fasting the month of Ramadan and so forth. Additionally being recognised within the Muslim community amongst the youth was a vital aspect in Ibrahim's desistance process. Ibrahim has desisted from crime for over a decade, transforming his life. Ibrahim frequently engages in motivational speaking in schools, conferences and events, alongside working in prisons for an organisation that employs ex-offenders and seeks to give offenders/ex-offenders a voice. The author (C-P) is an anti-gang Practitioner, with credibility across the country; this therefore established a research relationship (Gray, 2009). This relationship helped facilitate research with Ibrahim. This study chose to solely focus on Ibrahim as not many former gang members are around to tell their story. Many of whom have either been murdered, admitted to mental health institutions or have been sentenced to life in prison. Ibrahim's story provides a glimpse into the lived experience of coping with religion and desistance. Time spent with Ibrahim alongside in-depth interviews are central to this study.

Black men and crime

The writings of Cornel West (1993) in his empowering and influential book proclaim that "race matters" (p. 1). With the disproportionate numbers of Black men in prison, it questions the relevance of the aforementioned statement. Bowling and Phillips (2002) have described a tension when writing about race and crime. The concept of race is not a new phenomenon in criminology as Russell (1992) suggests that there is an under-representation in theoretical criminology around race and the under-representation of ethnic minorities in the discipline. Historically, the term

"black" has had various names in literature. "Negro, Black, African, Slave are words we often find in consensuses, documents, literature and common American speeches" (Srinivasa et al., 2004, p. 1). The notion of Black men and the criminal justice system is predicated on the basis that there is a social construct that makes Black male incarceration somewhat different.

Issues around race, culture and the over-representation of Black men in the criminal justice system are of paramount importance (see Brunson, 2007; Rome, 2004; Russell, 1998). Ibrahim discusses this very sentiment, referring to his time in prison. Ibrahim makes reference to the imprisonment of peers and individuals whom he once looked up to. Ibrahim acknowledges that in this current climate there is an over-representation of Black men in the criminal justice system. This is not a recent phenomenon, Ibrahim recounts seeing this over-representation when he was incarcerated over a decade ago suggesting that the issue of race and the criminal justice system has not gone away, but in some ways has become more complex. More recently in the academic arena, the relationship between race, offending and sentencing has been explored to some extent (see Feldmeyer and Ulmer, 2011; Leiber, 2015; Peck, 2016); however, some influential contributive factors are often overlooked. Sampson (1997) argues that "race has been referred to as the most controversial demographic of crime, a reality that is reflected in the reluctance of many criminology scholars to study the issue" cited in South and Messner (2000, p. 87). Although Sampson's view was expressed decades ago, arguably it stills holds some relevance.

Much of the research above was conducted in the USA (see Brunson, 2007; Feldmeyer and Ulmer, 2011; Leiber, 2015; Peck, 2016; Rome, 2004; Russell, 1998; Sampson, 1997; South and Messner, 2000), due to the differences in context, culture and overall population size, the research therefore cannot be generalised. Having said this, what is clear is that the current state of the criminal justice system in relation to Black men is chaotic in its nature; this is not a new concept, rather a reflection of society. When we look at Black men in the UK and the overuse of stop and search (Home Office, 2014), high Black male incarceration (Ministry of Justice, 2015) and high unemployment amongst Black men (Ball et al., 2012), the above echoes this very sentiment. Many writers make reference to Black men and crime (see Boothe, 2007; Glynn, 2014; Russell-Brown, 2009). If race is not a significant contributive factor to the issue of crime, then why is there such a prefix within the contexts of race, when referring to Black men and crime?

High incarceration rates of Black men are well-documented within the UK. Allen and Dempsey (2016) state "compared to the population as a whole, the non-white population is over represented accounting for 12% of the general population and 25% of the prison population at December 2016" (p.13). Further specifying that those who identify as Black make up 3 per cent of general population, in comparison to 12 per cent of the prison population. Which suggests there is a concerning level of disproportionality. The Ministry of Justice's (2015) prison population statistics, highlights that in September 2015 there were, 10,219 Black or Black British males, 6,853 Asian males and 60,117 White males in the prison system.

Religiosity

The term "convert" or "revert" is frequently used when referring to an individual's journey to religion. Having said this, the term "conversion" refers to a number of activities, those involving religion and beyond. Maruna et al. (2006) suggests that "attempts to reach a satisfactory definition of conversion and to distinguish it from those changes that are not conversions, however, have been largely unsuccessful" (p. 166). Within this paper, the importance does not lie in defining the term "conversion" rather exploring the concept highlighted by Snow and Machalek (1983), what changes when individuals convert to religion? To avoid any misrepresentation of the terms in this study, Ibrahim's own identification of religiosity was explored. Ibrahim does not use the term "convert"; however, he frequently makes reference to "embracing Islam" to illustrate his journey. This study therefore adopted Snow and Machalek's (1983) position, asking what "changed" when Ibrahim embraced religion.

Religiosity in this study includes both corporate religiosity and private spirituality as two dimensions of religiosity (Giordano et al., 2008). However, spirituality and religion can be viewed as entirely separate concepts, suggesting that a careful distinction between the two should be

made (see Abdullah-Johnson, 2015; Fetzer Institute National Institute on Aging Working Group, 2003; Schroeder and Frana, 2009). Glock and Stark (1965) have been influential in the understanding of religion and religiosity, and contend that with all world religions, there are five universal dimensions – "ideological (beliefs), intellectual (knowledge or cognitive), ritualistic, experimental and consequential". Ideological refers to the fundamental beliefs and what an individual believes to be true. Ibrahim makes reference to taking his Shahada, referring to the words of the Shahada, "there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that the Prophet Muhammad sallAllaahu alayhi wa sallam (peace and blessings be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah". This is essentially Ibrahim's ideological belief.

Rituals are the religious practices followed by the members who follow a particular religion. Diwali is a significant festival in Hinduism, Sikhism and Jainism (Verma, 2009), whereas fasting the month of Ramadan, performing Hajj and the celebration of the Eids would arguably fall into this category for Ibrahim. The intellectual dimension involves knowledge of relevant sources related specifically to one's religion or belief; this is to understand the components of one's religion. Ibrahim makes reference to going to the Masjid (Mosque) where he regularly meets with Imams, students of knowledge and his brothers in Islam. Ibrahim refers to the constant transfer of knowledge, this being a vital part of Ibrahim's overall understanding and development in Islam as he seeks to strive and learn more. Shepard (2013) states "a society expects religious persons to be informed about their faith" (p. 422). This can be seen in a wide range of discussions and debates surrounding religion, philosophy and theology.

Experimental looks at religious expression and attached feelings which can relate to religion in the sense of emotion. This can be in the form of visiting reverend holy sites, experiencing the feeling, emotion and connectedness this provides. Ibrahim talks about going to the Middle East, and discusses in some instances the feeling of inclusivity, peace and guidance. Finally, consequential (consequences) are the decisions and commitment made by those who follow particular religious beliefs. This may be in the form of supporting or opposing practices such as, but not limiting to, capital punishment, homosexuality and the slaughter of animals. Ibrahim's way of life has changed as a direct consequence of embracing Islam; Ibrahim makes reference to now opposing certain life choices that he once made. To put this into context, the decision and commitments made by those who follow particular belief systems has been recently documented in UK current affairs. Tim Farron stepped down as the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party, explaining that "remaining faithful to Christ was incompatible with being party leader after repeated questions over his faith" (Elgot and Stewart, 2017). Additionally, Christian hotel owners Peter and Hazelmary Bull, who refused a gay couple a double room, were found to have acted unlawfully (The Telegraph, 2011). Fundamentally in most cases, religion faith or belief systems state the impermissibility and permissibility of committing certain acts. It can be argued that the practice of religion can potentially impact future decisions and behaviour. Evidently in the cases above, personal beliefs had overall consequential impacts for those concerned.

In theory, for one who has embraced some form of religion and its teachings, the effects should be seen in his/her behaviour. However, one's interpretation and ideological perspective of religion can differ significantly from another. Therefore, the desistance process relating to religion is not clear cut, but is unique, presenting complexities and challenges. The construction of identity and the role it plays in the understanding of Islam can differ. There are a number of researchers who have explored Islam and identity (see Diamantides and Gearey, 2012; Jacobson, 2015; Riaz, 2013). Having said this, work from the early scholars hold much importance in the overall understanding of Islam (see Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Ibrahim's overall identity is constructed in the fact that he is both a practising Muslim and an African Caribbean male. Race, ethnicity and religion are complex terms that have raised debate in regards to their meaning; however, they are key points in Ibrahim's construction of identity.

Ibrahim views himself as a practising Muslim, someone who adhere to the five pillars of Islam consisting of the Shahada; the declaration that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; establishing the prayers (five times a day); to pay the Zakāh (charity to help the poor and those in need); to perform Hajj; and fasting in the month of Ramadan (see Abdul-Wahid, 2016; BBC, 2009; Philips, 2005). Ibrahim's identity is constructed in Islam; Islam is not solely seen as a religion, but a way of life.

Johnson and Jang (2011), however, expressed a detailed account of the effects of religiosity on crime and suggested that the fear of supernatural sanctions (hellfire) and strong social bonds promote conventional behaviour. Having said this, Topalli *et al.* (2013) argued that, in some cases, the association between faith and crime can be a harmful one. Kewley *et al.*'s (2015) study essentially found that those who held strong beliefs about God, punishment and the afterlife "used their beliefs not only to justify their offending behaviour but also as a motivation to do God's work" (p. 4). Topalli *et al.* (2013) argued that an association with religion was not the main reason, rather the misinterpretation of religious text and scripture. It is clear that the study of religion in relation to desistance and rehabilitation is important.

Black men reverting to Islam

The prison population by religious groups in the UK shows an increase of prisoners identifying as Muslim. There are 12,506 prisoners who identify themselves as Muslim, which equates to 14.6 per cent of the prison population, up by 6.9 per cent from 2002 (Allen and Dempsey, 2016, p. 13). The question whether individuals who profess to follow a particular religion actually practice the religion they claim to follow is debatable. Maruna *et al.* (2006) explored the role and importance of the jail cell conversion, expressing "the jail cell conversion from 'sinner' to true believer may be one of the best examples of a 'second chance' in modern life, yet the process receives far more attention from the popular media than from social science research" (p. 161).

Many researchers explored the growing emergence of Black men converting to Islam (see Adebayo, 2011; Reddie, 2009b; Spearlt, 2015). Adebayo (2011) suggests that in the last 20 years, Islam has arguably become the fastest growing religion amongst Black people in Britain. This is an area of current debate, as the research suggests that increasing numbers of Black men are converting to Islam in prison. However, there is a neglect of understanding surrounding the historical elements of Black men, conversion and religion, rather than solely focussing on the negative impact religion can have in some prison settings (see Chidzoy, 2008; Whitehead, 2010; White, 2013). Reddie (2009a) highlighted that Black conversion or reversion to Islam is not a new concept, explaining that "it has taken place in the African diaspora since time immemorial" (p. n/a). Identity and historical figures are important concepts here, some individuals may be looking for meaning and purpose, while others emulating individuals who they look up to. Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik al Shabazz) are the influential figures when we talk about Black men converting to Islam. Reddie's (2009b) research found that Malcolm X had influenced many Black men to consider Islam. Malcom X's autobiography is likened to a blueprint (Reddie, 2009a), which highlights a number of crucial elements surrounding his life, upbringing, institutional racism and criminality. Malcom X converted in the Nation of Islam whilst incarcerated, later embracing Islam in accordance to the orthodox Sunni Islamic teachings.

Ibrahim echoes this point to some extent and frequently discusses the importance of positive Black role models. Interestingly, Malcom X's journey holds relevance and is recognised by Ibrahim. Malcom X is a figure Ibrahim recognises for the plight of Black people. Ibrahim would not hold the views of Malcom X above the four great Imams, Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik ibn Anas, Imam Shafi'i and Iman Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and further would not hold the views of Malcom X above those referred to as the contemporary scholars of Islam such as, Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan, Shaykh Ubayd al-Jaabiree and Shaykh Rabee' bin Haadee.

Reddie's (2009b) research illustrates that the vast majority of individuals interviewed had previous connections to Christianity, either coming from a Christian household, or in some cases former church attendees. Reddie (2009a) explained the significant difference in comparison to white converts who tend to have no previous religious experience. Ibrahim however grew up in the Rastafarian era, which became increasingly present in the UK in the 1980 and 1990s. Ibrahim would not go as far to describe his household growing up as a Rastafarian household. However, there were some values adopted from the Rastafarian movement which begs the question that does Islam provide a distinctive desistance pathway in comparison to other religions? This area is largely under-researched; much research looks at why Black men convert to Islam (see Adebayo, 2011; Reddie, 2009b; Spearlt, 2015). However, very little has been explored on why more Black men are converting to Islam rather than other religions.

Desistance

The social structure is what essentially governs our lives, through elements such as education, employment and training networks. There is some consensus that everyone is not equally placed to access this structure, which can severely restrict one's ability to achieve success. Merton's (1938) paradigm of the social structure and anomie has been a source of reference in the realm of sociology, more specifically for the study of crime and deviance. Merton's theoretical perspectives have encouraged further research and theoretical discussion (see Agnew, 1992; Featherstone and Deflem, 2000; Hirschi, 1969; Merton, 1938). The Office for National Statistics shows that unemployment for young Black male jobseekers has risen from 28.8 per cent in 2008 to 55.9 per cent in 2011, twice the rate for young white people (Ball *et al.*, 2012). Smith (2003) argued that masculinity is connected with economic, social and psychological dimensions of human life. According to Harris and Miller (2006), "Black males intrinsically sense that they cannot achieve, but rather the social conditions and mass media's reinforcement of stereotypes remind and convince the Black male population that they experience struggle that is inevitable" (p. 85).

Desistance is used to explain how and why people stop committing crime; this has been a growing area of interest for many criminologists. However, Laub and Sampson (2001) argued that few studies have offered an operational definition of desistance. According to Krhon *et al.* (2009), "most but not all define desistance as the absence of criminal behaviour as in the cease and desist order, one first terminates, then desist or abstains from further offending" (p. 279). Bushway *et al.* (2001) and Laub and Sampson (2001) suggested that the time frame relating to what constitutes desistance from crime is continuously debated. One may stop committing crime for a year; however, Farrington (1986) argued that even a five-year or ten-year crime period is no guarantee that offending has terminated. There are many studies that explore the process of desistance such as the study by Maruna (1997, 1999, 2001), but, there is a lack of research in exploring identity, religion and how they interconnect.

Ibrahim explains that within Islam, there is an emphasis on the "Halal and Haram". The Halal is described as something which is permissible in the religion of Islam, the Haram, therefore, is known as the actions which are impermissible in Islam (Salih Al-Munajjid, 2015). The focus on the Halal and the Haram plays a vital role in Ibrahim's desistance process. Ibrahim explains that fundamentally the foundations and principles of Islam clearly state the impermissibility of committing various crimes/or sins, which should be understood and adhered to, especially by the one professing to follow the Islamic faith. Individuals, who adhere to the authentic principles illustrated in the *Qur'an*, and follow the way and life of the Prophet, consequently perform actions and make life choices that should not lead them to a path of criminality, rather start the desistance process. Desistance is much more than just staying away from the criminal behaviour. Ibrahim faced a number of challenges in relation to his desistance. Some of Ibrahim's peers could not understand the changes that he was encountering, the evolution from an active gang member, to a practising Muslim. Additionally, conflicts with rival gangs were an eye-opening experience for Ibrahim. Ibrahim suggests that prison broke down a number of barriers with peers and in some cases, rivals. Some embraced Islam and they were able to practice their religion freely with no issues relating to past conflicts and rivalry.

Offenders who are imprisoned for a substantial amount of time go through a number of challenges; therefore, the reality of the "outside world" and desistance can be a difficult process. The anxiety ex-offenders experience in relation to the stigma of failure upon release is documented. Nugent and Schinkel (2016) made reference to the "pain of goal failure". Ibrahim also refers to the challenges post release in relation to issues of identity, employment, engagement with the community and family commitments.

Identity is a prominent feature here; the label and stigma attached to individuals convicted of offences can be detrimental. Maruna *et al.* (2006) suggested that the stigmatising element experienced by prisoners is the loss of one's identity. For most, their identity is questioned, as they are no longer prisoners; however, some are unable to see themselves beyond the label attributed to their conviction; also some have not yet achieved a new identity. Reddie (2009a) suggested similar sentiments to the study of Maruna *et al.* (2006). Reddie (2009a) rather specifically explained that the majority of those interviewed suggested that Islam had given their

lives meaning; other characteristics were faith provided individuals with strength to "engage with a society they regarded as corrupted by materialism and moral relativism" (p. n/a).

The study into how and why individuals desist from crime has been a topic of criminological literature (see Farrall and Calverley, 2006; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001). Marsh (2011) highlighted the importance of self-narratives in promoting and sustaining desistance (see Maruna, 2001; Burnett, 2004b; Vaughan, 2011). Self-narratives (or storytelling) holds much importance and has had a central place in the desistance literature. Narratives are crucial concepts for desisters. Marsh (2011) further suggested that narratives are not solely crucial in understanding the past, however, has "significant effects in the present and toward the future by eliciting appropriate emotional responses that condition the agent's current dispositions" (Vaughan, 2011, p. 399). Desistance from crime is arguably dependent on developing a new identity, new values and beliefs that are not compatible or intertwined with offending (see Burnett, 2004a, b; Maruna, 2001; Vaughan, 2011).

Narratives are very important in academic research, and are revered as providing a "subjective account of meaning for significant life events and turning points. Often at least part myth, self-narratives are thought to help people explain their actions and decipher their motivations" (Marsh, 2011, p. 51). Maruna (2001) highlighted the complexities of the self-narrative of ex-offenders, suggesting that some of them hold versions of the truth that are in some cases different from the historical truth, described as the psychological truth, rather than the factual truth (Maruna, 2001). Narratives and the methodological standpoint can raise complexities, and in turn affect the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

Athen (1974) interviewed incarcerated offenders, Presser (2004) interviewed incarcerated and free offenders, whereas Topalli (2005) spoke to the active offenders. Each study required a different perspective from those involved. If Athen (1974) interviewed individuals before they were incarcerated, narratives may have significantly differed to those who were interviewed whilst incarcerated. Ibrahim was chosen because of his ability to provide narratives in the past and in the present. It is not solely enough for us to speak to offenders behind the prison walls, it is also important to engage with those who have desisted from crime, with the aim to understand a broader perspective.

Methodology

A longitudinal, qualitative research study which took place over six months was employed to investigate the role of religiosity in the life of Ibrahim. Burke (2001) suggested that the qualitative research is concerned with the subjective world and offers insight into social, emotional and experiential phenomena. Qualitative research involves a continuous process of reflection, providing a general understanding of the social context which is being studied. Arguably the voices of ex-offenders, professing Islam as a fundamental source to desistance are rarely explored. Criminologists have been too slow to explore the above. Research relating to offenders and ex-offenders is not neat and tidy, it is complex, chaotic and in need of further understanding.

This study explores the lived experiences of Ibrahim, an former gang member, ex-offender who professes Islam to be a fundamental source to his desistance. It was important to adopt an anti-positivist approach to research, the view that understanding is only possible from the subjective perspective of the individual concerned. Ibrahim was chosen for this study because he is an former gang member who speaks publicly about his experiences of gangs, criminality, prison and religion. Second, Ibrahim has desisted from crime for over ten years. Although, it is acknowledged that there is debate in regards to what constitutes desistance (see Bushway *et al.*, 2001; Farrington, 1986; Laub and Sampson, 2001, 2003), we felt that Ibrahim's ten-year desistance from crime was a strong starting point. The importance of narratives also comes into play here, as timing of interviews have the potential to influence the narratives received (see Athens, 1974; Presser, 2004; Topalli, 2005). For this paper, we felt that it was appropriate to explore the experiences of someone who could present a self-narrative in the past and the present. If Ibrahim's experiences were only captured whilst he was incarcerated, or in the first year of the desistance process, Ibrahim's narrative may have differed significantly.

This study utilised a criminological ethnographical approach, alongside semi-structured interviews, which was fruitful. The author (C-P) adopted the role of an ethnographer. His central aim was to provide rich, holistic insights into the views and actions of Ibrahim in the location he inhabited, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews (Gray, 2009). Thematic analysis was the appropriate method of data analysis, which involves identifying and describing both "implicit and explicit" ideas within the data further relying on the involvement and interpretation from the researcher/s.

Data collection

A clear explanation of the research was given to the participant; this allowed him to decide whether to participate (or not) in the study. The participant was informed that participation was voluntary, and he could withdraw at any time within the process. The author (C-P) met with the participant; informed consent was gained by signing the consent form. The participant requested that the pseudonym "Ibrahim" be used throughout the study. Ethical considerations were considered and followed at all times. Safety dictated the need for flexibility in interview location; interviews were conducted in a safe, secure, public location, according to the availability and convenience of both parties. Prior to conducting interviews, a number of activities were designed to build rapport. Over the six-month study, the author (C-P) and Ibrahim accessed community areas, visited restaurants and attended Mosques, funerals and academic events. Data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews took place three times over the six-month study. Interviews were recorded with consent, and recordings were transcribed at verbatim. The following interview questions provided a guideline during the initial interviews:

1. Describe your family.

2. Describe the relationship you have with your parents.

3. Describe where you grew up.

4. When did you first come into contact with the Criminal Justice System?

5. How old where you when you first went to prison?

6. What was it like leaving prison?

7. When did you embrace Islam?

8. What role does Islam play in your life?

9. What are the challenges of practising Islam?

10. What are your plans for the future?

The first phase involved the reading and re-reading of the transcripts by the authors, which allowed a general sense of familiarisation. The second phase, involved a summary of analysis of notes and the development of themes. Notes included reoccurring themes, positive elements, negative elements, criminality, family background, imprisonment and religiosity. Notes were further developed and analysed by the author (SR-E). The third phases involved the interpretation of data, and the selection of "core" themes. Analysis included referring back to the semi-structured interview transcribes, reflective diaries, alongside regular discussion between the authors to ensure the validity of analysis.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is suitable in generating theory (Bryman, 2008; Myers, 1997; Hayes, 2000). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the present themes that were related to the data. The development of themes was crucial to understanding. Riessman (2007) suggested that thematic analysis focuses more on the content, for example "what is said" more than how it is said (p. 2). Having spent time with Ibrahim, the author (C-P) noted down points that were frequently referred to, that included but were not limited to family, experience of prison and Islam. This, therefore, influenced the formation of questions, consequently a number of themes were

formulated in reference to the questions asked. It should be noted that various other questions were explored in an ethnographic research context. However, for the purpose of this paper, identity, religiosity and desistance are explored.

Limitations

The reason this study chose to solely focus on the account of Ibrahim is worth mentioning. Larger sample sizes in quantitative research are needed to achieve "generalisability" (Reidboldt, 2001, p. 218). However, this study adopted a qualitative methodology. Miles and Huberman (1994) highlighted that qualitative research usually works with a small sample of people. The goal of this study was to authentically explore Ibrahim's journey, in the context in which he is embedded (Reidboldt, 2001). We acknowledge that the responses from Ibrahim are not representative of all Black males, former gang members, ex-offenders, who have converted to Islam. This study, therefore, emphasises depth rather than breadth. Our goal is not for generalisation, but for in-depth understanding and exploration of Ibrahim's journey to desistance. It is important to note that criminologists are not "detached" observers, as Yardley *et al.* (2015) eloquently put it, as Social Scientists "we are inextricably intertwined with the social world around us. Our inquiries are conducted through lenses coloured by our lived realities, and our findings are given meaning by culturally mediated concepts, names, and labels" (p. 165). It is acknowledged that the author's (C-P) position could have resulted in subjective findings (Bryman, 2008). However, this study adopted an anti-positivist epistemology.

Results and findings

The collection of data consisted of transcribed semi-structured interviews, observations and reflective diaries. Ibrahim indicated that Islam had been influential within his life, both within and beyond the prison walls. In this study, the analysis of semi-structured interviews and reflective diaries, utilising thematic analysis allowed the formation of the following three core themes: desistance, religion and identity.

Desistance

Meeting with Ibrahim, exploring the process of desistance

Through the course of the study, a number of key themes emerged. Desistance was a challenging process for Ibrahim. Ibrahim also explores his initial interactions with the criminal justice system. The author (C-P) was taken to various areas within Birmingham which were significant to Ibrahim. Initially, desistance from crime was difficult, further maintaining desistance raised even more complexities. Ibrahim refers to the elements of loneliness, seclusion and self-doubt. In order to successfully desist from crime, Ibrahim had to distance himself away from some people. Attending social gatherings and partaking in activities that were once done with friends and family, which formed bonds had to be avoided to some extent. This was to prevent the possibility of temptation in relation to criminality. Ibrahim makes reference to the challenges of desisting from crime; however, the secondary issue of loneliness and separation is also highlighted.

Ibrahim showed the author (C-P) his local area where he grew up; the area he used to live; also introduced the author (C-P) to the members of his community alongside visiting family members, peers, community centres and local shops. Ibrahim explores his teenage years, where he first describes experiencing a number of challenges:

> The challenges I faced was when I started to get older in my teenage years […].

> So I would say from this era, is where the gangs I supposed started to form because you've got groups of us that are doing this, we quickly lost interest as we got older.

Ibrahim talks about the transition from music, DJs and street parties, to the formation of gangs. A lack of interest, and arguably boredom led many individuals to find other interests.

Ibrahim reflects upon this process, and frequently discusses past rivalries, peers and past criminality. Ibrahim has been to prison on a number of occasions expressing:

> I went to prison when I was 16, did 3 months remand […] and then at 24 I got 9 years and did 5 ½.

Ibrahim had a history of re-offending, illustrating that his journey to desistance was complex. Ibrahim describes his journey and the challenging experiences after being released from prison on multiple occasions:

> When I initially came out at 16, I remember going home dropping off my bags and I didn't even spend half an hour in the house. I went straight to the streets.

> When I came home after 19, I had fell in love for the first time, so I was coming out to my girlfriend and I had the intention to change and to not go back to prison.

Talking at public events and in groups, Ibrahim clearly highlighted that he did not benefit from his early years in prison. Ibrahim describes being in prison with all of his friends and the ages of 16 and 17 in prison were not particularly difficult. An interesting stage is when Ibrahim, at the age of 19, fell in love. The development of a relationship had given Ibrahim the intention to change and to not go back to prison which signifies the importance and impact of relationships on individual's desistance journeys. Desistance from crime was challenging for Ibrahim, a concern was a lack of money, and consequently the need to make money. Going back into a criminal lifestyle was essentially out of necessity, Ibrahim expresses:

> But in the end I was "broke" needed money, so ended going back into that lifestyle. However when I came out in 2010, from my 5 ½ years, having 2 children, having been on the run for 4 years, I just wanted to come out and I wanted to get my life sorted.

Ibrahim talked to the author (C-P) about the challenges of serving a five-and-a-half-year prison sentence; being on the run for a substantial amount of time; and fathering two children. This experience is quite a personal and emotional one for Ibrahim. All of the above were motivating factor for Ibrahim to change his life:

> Since I came out I got involved in public, motivational speaking in schools, at conferences and events […] I got involved working within the criminal justice system and I now work in prions for an organisation that employees ex-offenders that seeks to give offenders a voice.

Ibrahim's desistance journey has been complex. Ibrahim openly explores his involvement in crime, and describes the different impact of imprisonment, at different stages within his life. Upon reflection, Ibrahim highlights some problems relating to lifestyle choice and criminality, one being the lack of role models. Ibrahim explores the traits his father displayed, explaining that this was normalised within his community:

> I think if there was individuals that could of displayed positive traits, because my father was a drug dealer, a drug taker and a womaniser and that's what I saw and most of the males in the community, that's what they used to do, that's what I saw daily.

Ibrahim however does highlight one role model:

> I think if there was some role models, I don't recall any, the only role model I recall is an uncle who was a mechanic.

Ibrahim explored the complexities of desistance; desistance has to be understood on a deeper level. The lack of access to the social structure, alongside the breakdown of informal and formal control is crucial to our understanding. Additionally, the lack of positive role models was a crucial element for Ibrahim. As deviant and in some cases, criminal behaviours became normalised. To conclude, elements of isolation, loneliness and seclusion are highlighted as the consequences of desistance. Desistance in itself was challenging for Ibrahim, however the emotional and psychological impacts of desistance equally holds much importance.

Religion

Meeting with Ibrahim, exploring the role of Islam

The author (C-P) discussed the role of Islam with Ibrahim on multiple occasions. Ibrahim and the author (C-P) met in various locations which included going out to dinner, working out in the gym

and going to the Mosque. In the month of Ramadan, Ibrahim and the author (C-P) observed many nights at the Mosque for Taraweeh prayers. Taraweeh prayers are special evening prayers conducted in the month of Ramadan. Ibrahim seemed very comfortable in this setting. Prior and after prayers, Ibrahim discussed the role of Islam with the author (C-P) and some members of the congregation. Ibrahim described these individuals as his "brothers". A strong theme that came across was the link between desistance and Islam. Ibrahim made it clear that the foundations and principles of Islam clearly state the impermissibility of committing various crimes/or sins, further highlighting that these principles should be understood and adhered to, especially by the one professing to follow the Islamic faith. Although Ibrahim embraced Islam, Ibrahim describes some of the challenges experienced in regards to his peers:

> At 19 I had embraced Islam […] when I came out I did try, I stayed away from my crowd for almost 2 weeks, I think then I would of went to work or went to college, but I didn't know how to go about it.

The terminologies communicated by Ibrahim such as "I embraced Islam" are used to describe his acknowledgement, acceptance and practice of Islam. Moving on, in hindsight, Ibrahim discusses the potential of attending college, suggesting there was a lack of access to the social structure. Ibrahim specifically highlights the role of education, specifically college, further exploring the significance of his journey to Islam. Ibrahim explains that when he initially embraced Islam, this decision was not understood, and arguably not welcomed by some parts of his community:

> The faith initially when had embraced as a Black revert to Islam it was almost un heard of and initially I was seen or deemed as I was falling into mental health. The community couldn't understand it, but as years had gone by more and more Black men have embraced Islam.

Ibrahim discusses the current ease, and normalisation (in recent times) experienced by Black men who embrace Islam, in comparison to his experience. When Ibrahim embraced Islam, he was perceived as having border line mental health problems, due to his initial decision to convert. Although Ibrahim embraced Islam at the age of 19, he also went on to reoffend, which demonstrates the complexities of desistance and the role of religiosity. Ibrahim discusses his last prison sentence at the age of 24. This however was discussed in more detail with the author (C-P) over the course of the research. Ibrahim's last prison sentence raised a host of complexities, in relation to desistance, religion and identity. Ibrahim had committed an offence and went on the run for four and a half years. During this time, Ibrahim fled to the Middle East and learnt how to speak the Arabic language, got married and had two children. In 2004, Ibrahim decided to surrender himself to the authorities receiving a nine-year sentence and serving five and a half years. This particular prison sentence was influential in Ibrahim's desistance process. After surrendering himself to the authorities, Ibrahim felt that he went into prison a changed man. Ibrahim goes on to express the reasons why he has now desisted from crime for over a decade:

> But the reason why I have stayed away from the gang lifestyle and crime is of faith and belief system that I have learnt from practicing Islam and its I suppose give me a form of discipline that I didn't have, didn't see, didn't know in all those years growing up.

Ibrahim associated the reason for his desistance from a gang lifestyle and crime to his belief system. Islam has provided Ibrahim with structure and discipline, that of which he was not accustomed to whilst growing up. Practicing Islam has impacted the way in which Ibrahim first views himself, and the way he is viewed by the wider community. Throughout the research process Ibrahim makes reference to being a Black Muslim. Many of Ibrahim's friends self-identify as Black and race is openly discussed within conversations. Ibrahim acknowledges that a large number of Black men have embraced Islam. Explaining that the study of religiosity is not simplistic, there are various intersections such as gender, class and race that can impact or enhance the desistance process.

Identity

Meeting with Ibrahim exploring the role of identity

Identity comes in many forms, and Ibrahim's acceptance and embrace of Islam was apparent in many ways. Attire forms a part of identity, when Ibrahim attended the Mosque especially for Salaat-ul-Jummah (Friday prayers) or Taraweeh prayers (evening prayers conducted in the

month of Ramadan), he wore a thobe which is a long robe worn by Muslim men. Additionally language formed part of Ibrahim's identity; Ibrahim frequently used Arabic terms when greeting people. Terms such as "Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh" (May the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be with you); Insha'Allah (God willing/If Allah Wills); Alhamdulilah ("Praise be to Allah") and Subhan'Allah ("Glory to God"). The intertwined use of Arabic and English formed part of Ibrahim's identity.

Finally, Ibrahim's professionalism in regards to public speaking, writing and becoming a role model added to this new positive identity. Religion has played a significant role in Ibrahim's identity; Ibrahim describes the experiences of embracing and practising Islam both within and outside the prison walls:

> There is also a form of respect for any individual that has taken on the faith and taken on the faith seriously and because I had gone into prison for the fourth time, having been practising the faith in the outside community for a number of years and having learnt a number of things about the faith, when I went into prison I was seen as a role model and one who many could learn from.

Islam has given Ibrahim a positive identity; the focus at this time was on his knowledge of faith and the ability to practice Islam. In a sense, this new identity enabled Ibrahim to teach others. In his own right, Ibrahim had become a role model. Ibrahim later goes on to express the importance of having a positive identity:

> I wanted to remove that reputation, replace it for something more positive and so I felt I had a sense of wanting to give back and wanting to guide young people away from some of the decisions that I had made.

Ibrahim reflects upon his life and past criminality. An influential element in Ibrahim desistance process was the desire to shape a new positive identity teamed with a desire to guide others, and for others to learn from his mistakes. Ibrahim expresses the importance of identity:

> "I think the initial seed of Islam that was planted was when I was in prison 19" […] "and then the faith really is suppose gave me a sense of identity, my purpose and by having a sense identity I think I felt I could be more than what I actually was".

The role of Islam and the desire for a positive identity was crucial in Ibrahim's life. Ibrahim refers to having a sense of purpose and identity. Ibrahim describes Islam as providing a framework, and a sense that he could achieve, and change his life for the better. It is documented that in most cases sustained desistance requires an intentional shift in the person's sense of self (see Farrall, 2005; Maruna, 2001; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009). Paternoster and Bushway (2009) acknowledged that "Identity – a sense of who one is" (p. 1111) is important in relation to what motivates and provides a direction for behaviour. After embracing Islam, Ibrahim begun to see alternatives and positive possibilities for his life. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) suggested "individuals do not have just one identity. Most people have multiple views about themselves and therefore multiple identities that are organized into a salience hierarchy" (p. 1112). Ibrahim begun to question his identity, however, it is clear that Ibrahim did not have just one identity. Ibrahim was a son, father, former gang member and now a practising Muslim.

Paternoster and Bushway (2009) explored the concept of "working self" and "possible self". Ibrahim begun to explore his possible self, developing a sense of purpose, confidence and the development of a new identity. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) further explained the impact of seeing one's self in the future, goals, aspirations and in some cases anxieties. This was true for Ibrahim, Ibrahim started to acknowledge that his past criminality did not have to be the defining factor in his life. Ibrahim's perception of self and purpose had changed, self-esteem was enhanced and Ibrahim felt that he could make a positive contribution to society: "the impact of positive selves being achieved, and negative possible self-avoided, means that feelings about self are enhanced" (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009, p. 1114).

Ibrahim explains feeling the elements of self-doubt; concerns about possibly becoming involved in crime; unemployment; no income; loneliness and the inability to provide for his family. Although a "possible self" was in the forefront of Ibrahim's mind, and within Ibrahim's consciousness, there were also underlining concerns that things could possibly get worse in his life. It is clear that Ibrahim saw the possible self that he could potentially be which provided guidance, motivation and inspiration. "Possible selves, both positive and negative, not only contain images of what the

person would like to be or desperately fears becoming, they can also provide a specific and realistic set of instructions or a "roadmap" directing what one can do to both achieve" (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009, p. 1114).

Discussion

To our knowledge, the studies specifically focusing on the role of Islam in the life of an ex-offender are few and far between. Therefore, findings from this study are important to develop further understanding surrounding religiosity, offending and desistance. This study explores the lived experiences of Ibrahim, an former gang member, and ex-offender who professes Islam to be a fundamental source to his desistance process. As such, our study is vulnerable to some criticism that one cannot generalise on this basis. Yardley *et al.* (2015) expressed that "such a criticism is premised on the standards of the experimental approach of the natural sciences, which tests factors and variables" (Yardley *et al.*, 2015, p. 176). This study however has not tested factors and variables, rather engaging in an "exploratory" study in the context of discovery (McAdams, 2012). We acknowledge that our interpretation of data collected through ethnographical accounts, some of which are not documented through semi-structured interviews played a role in the creation of themes, and may not be the interpretation of others. We intend for this study to contribute to the knowledge base surrounding offenders and/or ex-offenders and religiosity. It is hoped that this study will be a catalyst for greater discussion and debate.

It is important to understand the current context of religion in prisons. Statistics show that just under 70 per cent of the prison population identify with some form of religion (Allen and Dempsey, 2016, p. 13), whether one actually practices the religion they profess to follow is debatable. The positive perception of Islam, identified by Ibrahim is in contrary to the popular media discourse surrounding Islam, at this present time. Islamic extremist, Jihadist and the negative role of Islam in some prisons consumes media coverage. See, for example, "Embracing Islam for the 'perks'" (Easton, 2010). Similarly, *The Telegraph's* article titled, "Prisoners under Pressure to Convert to Muslim 'Gang'" (Beckford, 2012).

It was clear from the literature review, results and findings that the role of Islam has played an influential role in the life of Ibrahim. Elements which emerged were the importance of converting to religion and the importance of reinterpreting one's life (Maruna *et al.*, 2006) and regaining a new identity. It was clear that desistance, identity and "embracing" Islam were interlinked. All of these elements at some stage were problematic for Ibrahim. First, Ibrahim had a desire to desist from crime; however, the desire was impacted by a form of double consciousness. Double consciousness is used to describe the individual whose identity is divided, "double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, ever feeling the element of two ness, two thoughts, two warring ideas in one body" (Du Bois, 2008, p. 12). Within this study, double consciousness appears to be between Ibrahim's desire to desist from crime, alongside the need to earn money and survive. Ibrahim had embraced Islam, however faced the dilemma of practising Islam, and staying away from criminality. Additionally, Ibrahim explores his dilemmas of embracing Islam, alongside being "on the run" from authorities for a previous crime. Ibrahim's narrative shows the complexities of criminality, desistance and identity. On one hand, Ibrahim believed that he had changed and begun practising Islam. On the other hand, Ibrahim had an outstanding charge against him and Ibrahim's identity at this stage was divided.

Understanding surrounding offenders and/or ex-offenders and religion within prisons and society is complex. The increased following of particular forms of religion is constantly changing for example, the growth of Buddhism (Beckford, 2009); the increased movement of Rastafarianism culture (Oswald, 2013) and the surge in Muslim prisoners (Shaw, 2015). It is important to note that there are various forms of religiosity. It cannot be assumed that all individuals follow the three Abrahamic faiths: Christianity, Judaism and Islam, or the religions acknowledged by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. It is clear from the prison statistics that the prison population in relation to religious identity is quite diverse (Allen and Dempsey, 2016). This needs to be understood further to understand the role of religion in the lives of offenders and/or ex-offenders.

Maruna *et al.* (2006) made reference to the jail cell conversion as being one of the most impressive "second chances" in modern life. Hence, there is a need to explore the role which religion plays

in the lives of those who convert to religion or identify with forms of religiosity. Maruna *et al.* (2006) further explored "the jail cell conversion" and the journey from "sinner to saint". In some cases, offenders who convert to religion from unbelievers to believers can be viewed as a cliché. Additionally, offenders who claim to be reformed can be quite a difficult concept for many to accept, understand or even welcome. Ibrahim's experience of embracing Islam embodies some of what Maruna *et al.* (2006) described. Ibrahim comes from an African Caribbean community where the emphasis at the time was forms of Christianity and specifically in the 1980s and 1990s, the Rastafarian movement emerged. Ibrahim explains that his community did not understand why he had embraced Islam. Black men converting to Islam at this time was not the norm, the question does not necessarily lie in Ibrahim's community finding it difficult to welcome him back due to the crime that he had committed. Rather, Ibrahim's decision to embrace and practice Islam was a concept that many had difficulty understanding and in some cases accepting. Which brings a question: can the following of a particular religion be viewed as more favourable than others? This seemed to be the case in the lived experience of Ibrahim.

Prisoners, offenders or ex-offenders who embrace religion are often scrutinised in relation to their "real intention", some are thought to be putting on an act to gain public sympathy; converting to religion to gain protection whilst in prison, and seeking to portray positive improvement to impress prison officials. Even when the role of religion has evidently had a positive impact, offenders may still carry negative stigmas. It is acknowledged that Ibrahim embraced Islam and was incarcerated over ten years ago. The number of prisoners at that time self-identifying as Muslim was much lower than the figure today in 2017. Throughout this study, Ibrahim has made it clear that he did not embrace or practice Islam for protection in prison, and he did not seek to portray a positive improvement to those in official positions. Ibrahim embraced Islam, and this is Ibrahim's way of life. The study illustrates the complexities of practicing Islam and leaving behind a life of crime. Ibrahim discusses some of the things that he used to do which were viewed as "Haram", actions impermissible in the religion of Islam. Further, Ibrahim discusses the role of the five pillars of Islam, and what is expected of a practising Muslim suggesting that the decision to embrace Islam is not a decision taken light heartedly, but a decision taken by those who truly believe. Ibrahim's decision to practice Islam was not easy in regards to desisting from crime, but a decision that prompted many discussions with "self" and required the support of those around him.

Identity is a key concept when discussing the role of religion and religiosity, even so how and where someone becomes religious seems to also hold much relevance. Lifton (1961) suggested that individuals are more receptive to "religious ideologies during periods when their self-identity is questioned, placed under strain, or threatened with annihilation" (Maruna *et al.*, 2006, p. 170). Further, catalysts for religious change are reported in psychological unease (Gillespies, 1973) and psychological trauma (Rambo, 1993). Ibrahim is identified as a Black Muslim of African Caribbean heritage. Ibrahim's family is from Jamaica which plays a role in his perception of race and culture, as one of the children from the African diaspora. Although Ibrahim relate with his culture and heritage, this does not conflict with the practice of his faith. Identity is important to Ibrahim as the research suggests that labels and stigma attached to offenders can be detrimental, consequently the society sometimes finds it difficult to welcome and reintegrate some individuals back into the community (Maruna *et al.*, 2006). The new identity attributed to Ibrahim as a result of practising Islam was appealing to Ibrahim. This new identity was not understood by all, but the importance lies in Ibrahim's perception of the new identity that he identifies with. Due to his offences, Ibrahim had been negatively labelled by the wider society. This positive attribution is in contrast to what Ibrahim was previously accustomed to. In a sense when one converts they have the opportunity to "reinterpret ones autobiography" (Maruna *et al.*, 2006, p. 166). One's position in life, future and purpose can be viewed radically differently with a new outlook.

The concept of a new identity in relation to religion is documented, individuals identify with a new self and attribution (Snow and Machalek, 1983). Snow and Machalek (1983) suggested that, this new identity is beneficial, a healing and coping mechanism replacing "secular or peripheral religious attributions that existed prior to conversions" (Maruna *et al.*, 2006, p. 167). Embracing Islam enabled Ibrahim to self-identify with something new, leave behind negative labels and self-transform. Ibrahim runs his own organisation that specialises in working with disaffected young people and he also currently engages in motivational speaking at schools, conferences and events, giving back to the society. Metaphorically speaking, Ibrahim seeks to rewrite his own autobiography, providing

hope and aspiration to others. Maruna (2001) reports that many ex-offenders had the intention to publish their stories, in the hope that the younger generations would learn from their personal lived experiences. Maruna (2001) further found that generativity was a key component in the account of individuals who have "gone straight" after a life of crime.

Ibrahim's narrative and journey is the one that undoubtedly warrants a platform. In regards to giving back and guiding the next generation, the concept of generativity seems fitting. Various scholars have conceptualised generativity in different ways. Erikson (1950) explained generativity as the "concern in establishing and guiding a next generation (p. 267). Although Erickson (1950) introduced the concept over 60 years ago, scholars have explored this further (see Browning, 1975: Kotre, 1984; McAdams, 1985; Maruna, 2001). Erikson emphasised the importance of parenthood on the process of generativity. Ibrahim is a father, however sees his role as guiding his own children, alongside giving back to the wider community. Therefore, generativity in Ibrahim's case is not only concerned with passing knowledge onto one's children, but passing knowledge onto the wider community. Ibrahim seeks to prevent others from making some of the wrong decisions he made growing up, it is about being a responsible citizen, a member of community and a leader (McAdams et al., 1998).

The desistance process for Ibrahim, a Black male, former gang member, ex-offender is both a complex and intricate issue. There are a number of complexities for ex-offenders who explain their desistance from crime. Maruna (2001) stated that "to successfully maintain this abstinence from crime, ex-offenders need […] a coherent and credible self-story to explain (to themselves and others) how their checkered pasts could have led to their new, reformed identities" (pp. 7-8). The construction of desistance narratives and the role of narrative and identity changes in desistance has been explored (King, 2013). Individuals seek to resituate themselves and their identities (May and Cooper, 1995; King, 2013). Ibrahim has done just this; his identity and narrative are now viewed with a different lens. However, one element that is worthy of discussion is not solely Ibrahim's construction of a new identity and his desistance narrative, but also the "ongoing" narrative which explores personal elements of Ibrahim's life, both past and present. Ibrahim uses his narrative to provide his subjective perspective, into his life course events. This therefore first provided Ibrahim with understanding of his life experiences as a whole, whilst giving those looking in a glimpse of further understanding.

This holds much importance in academic research at least, where we require order, understanding and clarity from initial criminality to the entire process of desistance. Giddens (1991) expressed that the autobiographical narrative provides this sense of coherence and order (King, 2013). Ibrahim's desistance narrative has been crucial in his personal journal, accounting for past criminality. This is an area that has been explored by various authors (see Burnett, 2004a, b; Gadd and Farrall, 2004; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001). King (2013) further highlight that narrative identities perform two broad functions "they condition future social interaction and behaviour […] On the other, narratives are conditioned by social structure and social interaction" (p. 152). Ibrahim's behaviours are in line with the narrative that he has constructed for himself. His desistance narrative is clear that he is an ex-offender who embraced Islam, a Black male who is giving back to his community. Ibrahim's internalised autobiography always seeks the continuity within identity and narrative, however frequently goes through a process of reflections, revisions and questioning (McAdams, 1985).

Ibrahim explores his past criminality in depth, it is noted that in Maruna's (2001) study desisting offenders tended to talk about their past, drawing clear distinction between crime and their true selves, distancing themselves from their crimes and from other criminals (Maruna, 2001). Ibrahim did not draw a clear distinction between his crimes and his true self rather Ibrahim explores the position he was in at the time of his crimes. Ibrahim acknowledges that he committed crimes for particular reasons, suggesting that at the time, these reasons seemed legitimate. Redemption narratives are portrayed by Ibrahim in the reported optimism he now has about his life. This is both linked to desistance from crime, and the practice of Islam. Ibrahim is hopeful that something positive can come from his past experience. Ibrahim identifies elements of why he is different from other criminals, for example, he was on the run and gave himself-up to authorities, he embraced Islam and begun practicing, and he has desisted from crime for over ten years. These are all the factors that distinguish Ibrahim from other offenders and/or ex-offenders.

The important element of the redemption script is evidently portrayed by Ibrahim to some extent. For example, "the assertion of a good core self" (Maruna, 2001). Ibrahim views himself as a

"good" person, with a positive role to play within his community; second, there is "a sense of control over and hope for the future" (Maruna, 2001). Ibrahim has an element of structure to his life, and is optimistic about the future; and, finally "generativity"(Maruna, 2001), Ibrahim's line of work involves giving something back to the community and it is hoped that his experience can help future generations. Ibrahim used his religion as his guide; Islam continued to give Ibrahim the discipline, courage and strength to stay away from crime. Most importantly, Islam gave Ibrahim a purpose. The results also highlight the imperative role Islam played in the shaping of Ibrahim's moral compass. It would seem that the link between desistance and religiosity not only proved beneficial for Ibrahim, but also helped in the construction of identity.

Although, this study cannot be representative of Black men at large, it is clear that offenders and/or ex-offenders who openly express and explore the role of religion in relation to desistance and rehabilitation should be documented. We propose that future research should combine this autobiographical account along with other broader quantitative data relating to religion and desistance. Second, we seek to conduct research into religion, and the role it plays in the construction of identity for both male and female offenders. Finally, a comparative study of different religious experiences and how they impact identity needs to be further explored. This is important to our broader understanding of criminological issues. The role of religiosity is an area which needs to be further explored, both within and outside the prison walls.

References

Abdullah-Johnson, A. (2015), "The truth about black religion and spirituality and the lies of Christianity, Islam", available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oei8UOQb2w (accessed 19 October 2015).

Abdul-Wahid, K.A. (2016), "Introduction to the five pillars (Islam 2.1)", available at: www.abukhadeejah.com/introduction-to-the-five-pillars-islam-2-1/ (accessed 23 June 2017).

Adebayo, D. (2011), "Young, Muslim and Black", available at: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00d872v (accessed 17 March 2017).

Agnew, R. (1992), "Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency", *Criminology*, Vol. 30 No. 1, pp. 47-87.

Allen, G. and Dempsey, N. (2016), "Prison population statistics", Briefing Paper No. SN/SG/04334, 4 July, London, available at: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04334/SN04334.pdf (accessed 27 February 2017).

Athen, L. (1974), "The self and the violent criminal act", *Urban Life and Culture*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 98-112.

Ball, J., Milmo, D. and Ferguson, B. (2012), "Half of UK's young black males are unemployed", available at: www.theguardian.com/society/2012/mar/09/half-uk-young-Black-men-unemployed (accessed 3 January 2017).

Barrett, D. (2016), "Levi Bellfield admits killing Milly Dowler for the first time", available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/12125889/Milly-Dowler-killer-Levi-Bellfield-admits-crimes-for-the-first-time.html (accessed 3 January 2017).

BBC (2009), "Five pillars of Islam", available at: www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/fivepillars.shtml (accessed 23 June 2017).

Beckford, M. (2009), "Buddhism is fastest-growing religion in English jails over past decade", available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/5977093/Buddhism-is-fastest-growing-religion-in-English-jails-over-past-decade.html (accessed 11 January 2017).

Beckford, M. (2012), "Prisoners under pressure to convert to Muslim 'gang'", available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/9298578/Prisoners-under-pressure-to-convert-to-Muslim-gang.html (accessed 6 March 2017).

Betts, R.D. (2010), *A Question of Freedom. A Memoir of Learning, Surviving and Coming of Age in Prison*, The Penguin Group.

Boothe, D. (2007), *Why are So Many Black Men in Prison*, Full Surface Publishing.

Bowling, B. and Phillips, C. (2002), *Race, Crime and Justice*, Pearson's, Harlow.

Browning, D. (1975), *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, Dell, New York, NY.

Brunson, R. (2007), "Police don't like black people: African American young men accumulated police experiences", *Criminology and Public Policy*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 71-101.

Bryman, A. (2008), *Social Research Methods*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Burke, R.H. (2001), *An Introduction to Criminological Theory*, 3rd ed., Taylor and Francis, Oxon.

Burnett, R. (2004a), "One-to-one ways of promoting desistance: in search of an evidence base", in Burnett, R. and Roberts, C. (Eds), *What Works in Probation and Youth Justice: Developing Evidence-Based Practice*, Willan, Cullompton.

Burnett, R. (2004b), "To reoffend or not to reoffend? The ambivalence of convicted property offenders", in Maruna, S. *et al.* (Eds), *After Crime and Punishment*, Willan, Cullompton.

Bushway, S. Alex, P., Briody, L., Cauffman, E. and Mazerolle, P. (2001), "An empirical framework for studying desistance as a process", *Criminology*.

Chidzoy, S. (2008), "Muslim convert 'recruits' Inmates", available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cambridgeshire/7464736.stm (accessed 17 March 2017).

Diamantides, M. and Gearey, A. (2012), *Islam, Law and Identity*, Taylor and Francis, Oxon.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (2008), *The Soul Black Folk*, Arc Manor, Rockville, MD.

Easton, M. (2010), "Islam prison conversions", available at: www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/markeaston/2010/06/islam_prison_1.html (accessed 6 March 2017).

Elgot, J. and Stewart, H. (2017), "Tim Farron quits as Lib Dem leader", available at: www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/14/tim-farron-quits-as-lib-dem-leader (accessed 23 June 2017).

Erikson, E. (1950), *Childhood and Society*, Norton, New York, NY.

Farrall, S. (2005), "On the existential aspects of desistance from crime", *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp. 367-86.

Farrall, S. and Calverley, A. (2006), *Understanding Desistance from Crime*, Open University Press, London.

Farrington, D. (1986), "Age and crime", in Morris, N. and Tonry, M. (Eds), *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Vol. 7, Chicago University Press, Chicago, IL.

Featherstone, R. and Deflem, M. (2000), "Anomie and strain: context and consequences of Merton's two theories", available at: www.cjresources.com/CJ_Crim_Theory_pdfs/Anomie%20and%20Strain%20Context%20and%20Consequences%20of%20Mertons%20two%20theories%20-%20Featherstone%20et%20al%202003.pdf (accessed 26 January 2016).

Feldmeyer, B. and Ulmer, J.T. (2011), "Racial/ethnic threat and federal sentencing", *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 238-70, doi: 10.1177/0022427810391538.

Fetzer Institute National Institute on Aging Working Group (2003), *Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness/Spirituality for Use in Health Research*, Fetzer Institute, Kalamazoo, MI.

Gadd, D. and Farrall, S. (2004), "Criminal careers, desistance and subjectivity: interpreting men's narratives of change", *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 123-56.

Giddens, A. (1991), *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Gillespie, V.B. (1973), "Religious conversion and personal identity: how and why people change", unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama, Birmingham.

Giordano, P.C., Cernkovich, S.A. and Rudolph, J.L. (2002), "Gender, crime and desistance: toward a theory of cognitive transformation", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 107 No. 4, pp. 990-1064.

Giordano, P.C., Longmore, M.A., Schroeder, R.D. and Seffrin, P.M. (2008), "A life-course perspective on spirituality and desistance from crime", *Criminology*, Vol. 46 No. 1, pp. 99-132.

Glock, C.Y. and Stark, R. (1965), *Religion and Society in Tension*, Rand McNally, San Francisco, CA.

Glynn, M. (2014), *Black Men, Invisibility, and Crime: Towards a Critical Race Theory of Desistance*, Routledge, London.

Gray, D.E. (2009), *Doing Research in the Real World*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, London.

Hallett, M. and McCoy, S.J. (2015), "Religiously motivated desistance: an exploratory study", *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 59 No. 8, pp. 855-72.

Harris, O. and Miller, R.R. (2006), *Impacts of Incarceration on the African American Family*, Transactions Publishers, NJ.

Hayes, N. (2000), *Doing Psychological Research: Gathering and Analysing Data*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Hirschi, T. (1969), *Causes of Delinquency*, University of California Press, ISI Web of Science, Berkeley, CA, available at: www.isiwebofknowledge.com/index.html (accessed 22 July 2003).

Home Office (2014), "Stop and search: Theresa May announces reform of police stop and search", available at: www.gov.uk/government/news/stop-and-search-theresa-may-announces-reform-of-police-stop-and-search (accessed 6 April 2017).

Jacobson, J. (2015), *Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity Among British Pakistani Youth*, Routledge, London.

Johnson, B. and Jang, S.J. (2011), "Crime and religion: assessing the role of the faith factor", in Hallett, M. and McCoy, S. (2015), *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 59 No. 8, pp. 855-72.

Johnson, B.R. and Larson, D.B. (2003), *The InnerChange Freedom Initiative: A Preliminary Evaluation of a Faith-Based Prison Program*, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

Kewley, S., Beech, R.A. and Harkin, L. (2015), "Examining the role of faith community groups with sexual offenders: a systematic review", *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.07.016

King, S. (2013), "Early desistance narratives: a qualitative analysis of probationers' transitions towards desistance", *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 15 No. 2, pp. 147-65.

Kotre, J. (1984), *Outliving the Self: Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.

Krhon, D.M., Lizotte, J.A. and Hall, J. (2009), *Handbook on Crime and Deviance*, Springer, Dordrecht; Heidelberg; London and New York, NY.

Laub, J. and Sampson, R. (2001), *Understanding Desistance from Crime*, The University of Chicago.

Laub, J. and Sampson, R. (2003), *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Leiber, M. (2015), "Race, prior offending, and juvenile court outcomes", *Journal of Crime and Justice*, Vol. 39 No. 1, doi: 10.1080/0735648X.2015.1110232.

Lifton, R.J. (1961), *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, Norton, New York, NY.

McAdams, D. (1985), *Power, Intimacy and the Life Story: Personological Inquiries into Identity*, The Guildford Press, London.

McAdams, D., Hart, H. and Maruna, S. (1998), "The anatomy of generativity", in McAdams, D. and Aubin, E. de St (Eds), *Generativity and Adult Development*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, pp. 7-43.

McAdams, D.P. (2012), "Exploring psychological themes through life narrative accounts", in Holstien, J.A. and Gubriam, J.B. (Eds), *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 15-32.

Marsh, B. (2011), "Narrating desistance: identity change and the 12-step script", *Irish Probation Journal*, Vol. 8, pp. 49-68.

Maruna, S. (1997), "Going straight: desistance from crime and self-narratives of reform", *The Narrative Study of Lives*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 59-93.

Maruna, S. (1999), "Desistance and development: the psychosocial process of 'going straight'", *The British Criminology Conferences: Selected Proceedings, Vol. 2, Papers from the British Criminology Conference, Queens University, Belfast, 15-19 July*.

Maruna, S. (2001), *Making good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*, American Psychology Association Books, Washington, DC.

Maruna, S., Wilson, L. and Curran, K. (2006), "Why God is often found behind bars: prison conversions and the crisis of self-narrative", *Research in Human Development*, Vol. 3 Nos 2/3, pp. 161-84, available at: http://johnjayresearch.org/cje/files/2012/10/Why-God-is-found-behind-bars.pdf (accessed 21 December 2015).

May, C. and Cooper, A. (1995), "Personal identity and social change: some theoretical considerations", *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 75-85.

Merton, R. (1938), "Social structure and anomie", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 3 No. 5, pp. 672-82.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.

Ministry of Justice (2015), "National statistics offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2015. Prison population", available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2015 (accessed 30 September 2015).

Myers, M.D. (1997), "Qualitative research in information systems", *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 241-2, available at: www.misq.org/discovery/MISQD_isworld/; www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/ (accessed 4 January 2008).

Nugent, B. and Schinkel, M. (2016), "The pains of desistance", *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, Vol. 16 No. 5, pp. 568-84.

Oswald, J. (2013), "Why the world is turning rasta", available at: www.voice-online.co.uk/article/why-world-turning-rasta (accessed 11 January 2017).

Paternoster, R. and Bushway, S. (2009), "Desistance and the 'feared self': towards an identity theory of criminal desistance", *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, Vol. 99 No. 4, available at: www.albany.edu/bushway_research/publications/Paternoster_Bushway_2009.pdf (accessed 24 June 2017).

Peck, J. (2016), "Contemporary issues of race/ethnicity, offending behavior, and justice responses", *Journal of Crime and Justice*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 1-8.

Philips, A.B. (2005), *The Fundamentals of Tawheed – Islamic Monotheism*, International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh.

Presser, L. (2004), "Violent offenders, moral selves: constructing identities and accounts in research interview", *Social Problems*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 82-101.

Rambo, L.R. (1993), *Understanding Religious Conversion*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

Reddie, R. (2009a), "Why are black people turning to Islam?", London, available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/oct/05/Black-muslims-islam (accessed 17 March 2017).

Reddie, S.R. (2009b), *Black Muslims in Britain: Why are a Growing Number of Young Black People Converting to Islam?*, Lion Hudson.

Reidboldt, W. (2001), "Adolescent interactions with gangs, family, and neighbourhoods", *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 211-42.

Riaz, A. (2013), *Islam and Identity Politics Among British-Bangladeshis: A Leap of Faith*, Manchester University Press.

Riessman, K.C. (2007), "Narrative analysis", in Lewis-Beck, M.S., Bryman, A. and Futing Liao, T. (Eds), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, Vol. 3, Sage, London.

Rome, D. (2004), *Black Demons: The Media's Depiction of the African American Male Criminal Stereotype*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CJ.

Russell, K. (1992), "The development of a black criminology and the role of the black criminologist", *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 9 pp. 667-83.

Russell, K. (1998), *The Color of Crime: Racial Hoaxes, White Fear, Black Protectionism, Police Harrasment and Other Macroagression*, University Press, New York, NY.

Russell-Brown, K. (2009), *The Color of Crime*, New York University Press.

Salih Al-Munajjid, M. (2015), "Principles of Fiqh – Usool al-Fiqh", available at: https://islamqa.info/en/10887 (accessed 10 December 2015).

Sampson, R.J. (1997), "The embeddedness of child and adolescent development in the community – level perspective on urban violence", in Mccord, J. (Ed.), *Violence and Childhood in the Inner City*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 31-77.

Schroeder, D.R. and Frana, F.J. (2009), "Spirituality and religion, emotional coping, and criminal desistance: a qualitative study of men undergoing change", *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological. Association*, Vol. 29 No. 6, pp. 718-41, doi: 10.1080/02732170903189076.

Shaw, D. (2015), "Why the surge in Muslim prisoners?", available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31794599 (accessed 19 Novemeber 2017).

Shepard, J. (2013), *Sociology*, Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Smith, A.C. (2003), "Moving toward a reconstruction of black masculinity", Carpenter ProgramProjectPaper, available at: www.ibrarian.net/navon/paper/_Moving_Toward_a_Reconstruction_of_Black_Masculin.pdf? paperid=13830222 (accessed 30 October 2015).

Snow, D.A. and Machalek, R. (1983), "The convert as a social type", in Collins, R. (Ed.), *Sociological Theory*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

South, S.J. and Messner, S.F. (2000), "Crime and demography multitude linkage reciprocal relation", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26, pp. 83-106.

SpearIt (2015), "Growing faith: prisons, Hip-Hop and Islam", available at: www.huffingtonpost.com/spearit/ growing-faith-prisons-hip-hop-and-islam_b_2829013.html (accessed 17 January 2017).

Srinivasa, K., Owens, A. and Vyas, A. (2004), *Voices from Prison: An Ethnographic Study of Black Male Prisoners*, University Press of America.

Sumter, M.T. and Clear, T.R. (1998), "An empirical analysis of literature examining the relationship between religiosity and deviance since 1985", unpublished manuscript, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL.

The Telegraph (2011), "Gay couple awarded damages after Christian hotel owners refused to let them share double room", 18 January, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8266097/Gay-couple-awarded-damages-after-Christian-hotel-owners-refused-to-let-them-share-double-room.html (accessed 23 June 2017).

Thornton, L. (2016), "'Most hated mum in Britain' Karen Matthews begs for forgiveness after faking daughter Shannon's kidnap", available at: www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/most-hated-mum-britain-karen-9439985 (accessed 3 January 2017).

Topalli, V. (2005), "When being good is bad: an expansion of neutralisation theory", *Criminology*, Vol. 43 No. 3, pp. 797-835.

Topalli, V., Brezina, T. and Bernhardt, M. (2013), "With god on my side: the paradoxical relationship between religious belief and criminality among hardcore street offenders", *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 49-69.

Vaughan, B. (2011), "Subjectivity, narration and desistance", in Mohammed, M. (Ed.), *Sortir de la délinquance: Théories, enquêtes, perspectives internationals*, translated as "*Subjectivité, récit et abandon de la délinquance*, La Decouverte, Paris.

Verma, R. (2009), *Faith and Philosophy of Hinduism*, Kalpaz Publications, London.

West, C. (1993), *Race Matters*, Beacon, Boston, MA.

White, M. (2013), "Inmates bullied into converting to Islam", available at: http://news.sky.com/story/inmates-bullied-into-converting-to-islam-10430958 (accessed 17 March 2017).

Whitehead, T. (2010), "Prisoners converting to Islam for 'perks'", available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/ uknews/law-and-order/7808783/Prisoners-converting-to-Islam-for-perks.html (accessed 17 March 2017).

Yardley, E., Wilson, D., Kemp, D. and Brookes, M. (2015), "Narrative beyond prison gates: contradiction, complexity, and reconciliation", *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology 2015*, Vol. 59 No. 2, pp. 159-79.

Further reading

Armour, M.P., Windsor, L.C., Aguilar, J. and Taub, C. (2008), "A pilot study of a faith-based restorative justice intervention for Christian and Non-Christian offenders", *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 159-67.

Benedict, W.R. (2009), "Giving back not giving up: generativity among older female inmates PhD", University of Tennessee, Knoxville, available at: http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/562 (accessed 24 June 2017).

Burnside, J. (2008), "From England, religious interventions in prison", available at: http://seekjustice.co.uk/ MyBrothersKeeperDownloads/religion_prisons_Kairos_APAC_Kainos.pdf (accessed 16 October 2015).

Cashmore, E. (1984), *No Future: Youth and Society*, Heinemann, London and New York, NY.

Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine Publishing, Piscataway, NJ.

Home Office (1992), *Race and the Criminal Justice System*, Home Office, London.

Hood, R. (1992), *Race and Sentencing*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Lipsey, M. and Wilson, D. (1998), "Effective intervention for serious juvenile offenders: a synthesis of research", in Loeber, R. and Farrington, D.P. (Eds), *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 313-45.

McDonald, H. (2014), "Bert and Ernie Gay marriage cake refused by Northern Ireland Bakery", available at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jul/08/bert-and-ernie-gay-wedding-cake-northern-ireland-ashers-bakery (accessed 4 January 2017).

Mahoney, A. and Pargament, K.I. (2004), "Sacred changes: spiritual conversion and transformation", *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 60 No. 5, pp. 481-92.

Maruna, S. and Roy, K. (2006), "Amputation or Reconstruction? Notes on 'Knifing off' and desistance from crime", *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 104-24.

Morgan, S. (1999), "Prison lives; critical issues in reading prisoner autobiography", *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 328-40.

Noble, W. and Goddard, L. (1984), *Understanding the Black Family: A Guide for Scholarship and Research*, Black Family Institute, Oakland, CA.

Ramesh, R. (2010), "More black people jailed in England and Wales proportionally than in US", available at: www.theguardian.com/society/2010/oct/11/Black-prison-population-increase-england (accessed 10 December 2015).

Rassool, G. (2016), *Islamic Counselling: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Routledge, East Sussex.

Shover, N. (1985), *Aging Criminals*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA.

Smith, S. (2016), "Christian bakers fined for refusing to Make Gay marriage 'Bert and Ernie' cake lose appeal", available at: www.christianpost.com/news/christian-bakers-fined-not-baking-support-gay-marriage-cake-ireland-lose-appeal-171064/#RWqjPXZmXT6zfLbY.99 (accessed 4 January 2017).

Stanley, L. (1992), *The Auto/Biographical 1: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography*, Manchester University, Manchester.

The Holy Qur'an. Surah al-Fatihah, Aayats (Verses) 5-6, Transliteration in Roman Script with Arabic Text and English Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, translation by M. Abdul Haleem Eliyasee, ISBN 81-7231-570-8, published in 2004 for the Islamic Book Service, New Delhi.

Wilson, D. (2003), "'Keeping Quiet' or 'Going Nuts': emerging strategies used by young black people in custody at times of childhood being reconstructed", *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 42 No. 5, pp. 411-25.

X, M. and Haley, A. (1964), *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, Penguin, London.

Corresponding author

Shona Robinson-Edwards can be contacted at: shona.robinson-edwards@bcu.ac.uk