

**Appraising Belonging and Displacement: An Analysis of Evaluative Language and Identity  
Construction in Naqvi's *Home Boy***

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**ABSTRACT**

*Home Boy* by H.M. Naqvi tells the story of Pakistani immigrants in New York City after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, looking at difficulties with identity and a sense of belonging. Although existing studies focus on these themes socially and culturally, this study evaluates how characters' word choices build and manage their identities in such a turbulent social and political climate. Using Appraisal Theory, which is part of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & White, 2005), I analyzed samples from the book to see how characters experience Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation. The research found that the language describing identity changed from confidently being a mix of various cultures before 9/11 to feeling doubtful, insecure, and distant afterward. It can be seen how socially rejected characters develop an identity crisis, dealing with both being looked at with suspicion and with feelings of displacement. Characters in novels use different linguistic strategies to participate in or argue against the main ideas, and their experiences become more dramatic and vivid as the story advances. It is concluded in the study that the characters' language in *Home Boy* shapes the readers' understanding of their struggle to feel a part of things, demonstrating the power of language to express experiences such as trauma and marginalization. This research helps examine how diasporic literary styles are made and confirms the use of Appraisal Theory in highlighting different aspects of identity in stories.

**Keywords:** Appraisal Theory, H.M. Naqvi, *Home Boy*, Identity Construction, Belonging, Displacement, Post-9/11 Literature

**INTRODUCTION**

The terrorists' attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, altered the social landscape of the USA, particularly for individuals with Muslim or South Asian backgrounds. Those who were living there peacefully faced a crisis of identity. They fought a psychological battle between belonging and displacement—whether they were Pakistanis, Americans, or neither. This dilemma of identity crisis is a prominent theme in post-9/11 Pakistani literature, powerfully discussed in *Home Boy* by Naqvi, which gives valuable insights into these very struggles of every immigrant Pakistani in the USA. The novel *Home Boy* (2010) vividly captures this dilemma, revolving around the lives of Pakistani young boys—Chuck, AC, and Jimbo—three young migrants in New York, USA, with American dreams in their hearts, completely merged in New York life, having the feeling of belonging. But the unfortunate day of 9/11

turned their lives upside down when the feelings of belonging changed into feelings of displacement. Those who were perfectly fit in that culture faced suspicious prejudice from the USA society. The novel offers a lens to the audience to examine how identities are shaped, challenged, and performed in a changing sociopolitical landscape. This makes it a rich text to explore the intricate connections between personal experience and societal currents.

While *Home Boy* has gained significant critical attention for its rich themes of identity crisis, sense of belonging, and displacement in the post-9/11 scenario, most of the studies have explored the novel through a broader lens of sociocultural interpretations. Almost none of the significant studies have explored this compelling text for the linguistic mechanisms through which characters express their inner feelings of identity crisis, sense of belonging, and displacement. To address this, the current study will explore the narrative through Appraisal Theory, a linguistic mechanism in Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Martin and White (2005). This theory gives a systematic methodology to analyze the language used to express inter-subjective positioning, including the expression of feelings (Affect), the judgment of human behavior (Judgement), and the valuation of objects and processes (Appreciation). This study will explore the prominent appraisal patterns to identify how the language choices contribute to the characters' construction and reconstruction of identities amidst their belonging and displacement scenario due to cultural hybridity and the post-9/11 environment.

This research primarily seeks answers to these questions:

1. What are the specific appraisal resources used in H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* to express characters' attitudes, emotions, and evaluations regarding their feeling of belonging and displacement?
2. How do these appraisal resources contribute to the construction and reconstruction of the characters' identities in the post-9/11 scenario?
3. How do the identities, revealed through Appraisal Theory, illuminate the characters' feelings of belonging and experiences of displacement?

For analysis, a few purposely sampled excerpts, having rich evaluative language with respect to the discussed themes, will be analyzed. By undertaking this rich linguistic analysis through Appraisal Theory, the study aims to offer new insights into the narrative, specifically how the characters articulate their identities and negotiate their feelings of belonging and displacement through the use of specific evaluative language in the post-9/11 dilemma. The study not only contributes to the existing literature on H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* but also to the broader field of stylistic analysis concerned with identity construction in narratives.

The study proceeds as follows: first, a review of relevant literature on *Home Boy* (2010) and Appraisal theory is presented, followed by an outline of the methodology for data selection and procedure. Subsequently, the textual analysis of appraisal patterns leads into the discussion & conclusion section.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review situates the present study by exploring three key areas. First, it will explore the relevant studies on *Home Boy* (2010), focusing on the themes of identity crisis, belonging, and displacement in the post 9/11 scenario. Second, it underpins the theoretical framework of appraisal theory chosen for textual analysis in the broader context of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Finally, focusing on

the linguistic research on the relevant themes, highlighting the research gap, this study aims to fill by exploring the text through the linguistic lens of Appraisal theory.

### **Synopsis of Previous Studies**

Rashid, Jabeen, and Shahbaz (2020), while focusing on counter discourse and identity re-writing from a thematic and socio-political lens, argue that before 9/11, the identities of characters like Chuck, AC, and Jimbo were merged in American culture. After 9/11, they faced prejudice and were declared as others. They also highlight that the novel represents that the Muslims then developed a strong consciousness of their identities and started to rewrite their identities to counter the negative portrayal of the West.

Focusing on the same themes, Ullah et al. (2021) state that the characters in *Home Boy* (2010) experience a hybrid identity after moving to America. They experience both a sense of belonging and displacement as they attempt to acquire the qualities of the host culture, such as by changing their names while still retaining their native cultural norms. The novel also emphasizes that borders are not only physical but also exist as mental consciousness, allowing insiders to treat immigrants as outsiders. A key point the article posits is the characters' realization that they may need to return to their native country to get the respect and rights they strive for in the host country.

Similarly, Ashfaq, Aurangzeb, and Naeem (2022) in their work, "*Home Boy: A Case of Identity Crisis and Transformation*," highlight that the novel portrays the identity crisis faced by Muslims and particularly Pakistani Muslims in the USA. The authors highlight the shift from a sense of belonging to displacement, from a hybrid identity to a fixed identity for the three youngsters, like Chuck, AC, and Jimbo.

Building on this notion, Iqbal, Ahsan, and Rashid (2023) argue that in *Home Boy* (2010), characters like AC and Jimbo assimilate into the American Dream at the cost of their native cultural norms. However, the events of 9/11 disrupted this assimilation, leading to difficulties, suspicion, and marginalization. They highlight that the resulting identity crisis stems from the reconstruction of Muslim identities, as Muslims were increasingly perceived as the "Other." Furthermore, the article claims that the novel is a counter-narrative to the stereotypical American portrayal of Muslims as terrorists.

Furthermore, Ajmal, Rehan, and Kanwal (2024) argue that *Home Boy* is a novel that questions the identity, belonging, and culture of Pakistani emigrants in the USA, providing insight into their identity construction and reconstruction. They argue that the novel is a challenge to the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims' religiosity and conservative nature.

The current study approaches the novel for analysis through the linguistic lens. For this purpose, the study explores the sampled excerpts through Appraisal Theory, a linguistic mechanism in Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Martin and White (2005). SFL views language not merely as a set of rules, but as a social semiotic system—a resource for making meaning in context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Appraisal Theory particularly focuses on the interpersonal meta-function of language, specifically on appraisal resources used for evaluating, adopting stances, constructing textual personas, and managing inter-subjective positioning.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is methodologically and theoretically grounded in the Appraisal system, an approach to analyzing evaluative language developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & White, 2005).

The Appraisal system provides a rigorous framework for understanding how language is used to express feelings, adopt stances, and negotiate interpersonal relationships. It reveals the linguistic resources through which writers and speakers convey their attitudes and align or disalign themselves with their audience. The framework is organized into three primary, interacting domains: **Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation**.

**Attitude:** The Language of Feeling and Evaluation

The domain of Attitude is concerned with the resources for expressing feelings and values, categorizing evaluations as either positive or negative. This domain is subdivided into three main regions based on the nature of what is being evaluated.

**Affect:** This subsystem registers emotional responses. It is the language of happiness or sadness, security or fear, satisfaction or frustration. These categories capture the direct emotional tenor of the discourse.

**Judgement:** This subsystem evaluates human behavior and character against a system of social norms. It encompasses moral and ethical assessments, judging people's actions and character (e.g., as brave, dishonest, capable, or inappropriate).

**Appreciation:** This subsystem evaluates the aesthetic qualities and social value of objects, products, processes, and texts, which assesses their cultural or social significance.

**Engagement:** The Language of Stance and Dialogue

The domain of Engagement maps the linguistic resources for positioning the authorial voice relative to other voices and alternative propositions within a discourse. It is fundamentally concerned with the intersubjective nature of communication. The primary distinction is between a single, unmediated voice (**monoglossia**) and a voice that explicitly engages with others (**heteroglossia**). The hetero-glossic system is further divided into two functional categories:

**Dialogic Expansion:** These resources open the dialogic space to alternative viewpoints, inviting negotiation and acknowledging diversity of opinion. The key resource identified in this analysis is Entertain, where the author introduces a proposition as one possibility among others, often using modal expressions like it seems or perhaps.

**Dialogic Contraction:** These resources challenge, restrict, or reject alternative viewpoints, thereby closing down the dialogic space. These include resources of Disclaim, which involve rejecting or countering a prior or potential position. This includes:

**Deny:** A direct negation (e.g., "This is not the case")

**Counter:** Presenting a viewpoint as a reaction that supplants an alternative (e.g., "Although some argue X, the reality is Y").

**Graduation:** The Language of Intensity and Focus

The domain of Graduation provides the resources for adjusting the strength of an evaluation and the precision of its boundaries. It allows speakers to grade how strongly they feel and how sharply they define things. Graduation operates along two axes:

**Force:** This system modulates the intensity or degree of an evaluation. It includes resources for amplification (up-scaling intensity) and for softening the evaluation.

**Focus:** This system adjusts the sharpness of category boundaries. It is used to make a category more prototypical (Sharpen, e.g., "a true hero") or to blur its edges (Soften, e.g., "kind of sad").

Appraisal Theory has proven to be a robust tool for analyzing evaluative language across a wide range of written or spoken discourses. Its application to literary texts has also yielded significant insights into characterization, narrative voice, and thematic development. The framework's detailed attention to attitudinal positioning makes it particularly well-suited for investigating how characters in *Home Boy* linguistically express and negotiate their identities and experiences of belonging and displacement.

While we have seen *Home Boy* gain significant attention, and a number of studies have explicitly talked about the themes of identity crisis, belonging, and displacement, the point is that these studies have approached the novel through thematic and stylistic lenses. To date, no study has systematically applied SFL theories to analyze the evaluative language choices the characters make to construct and reconstruct their identities and express their feelings of belonging and displacement in the post-9/11 scenario. While the present literature has identified these key themes, the precise linguistic instantiation of these experiences through patterns of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation remains an important area for investigation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research approach for the textual analysis of H.M. Naqvi's *Home Boy*. The research design is a single case study focusing specifically on *Home Boy* for the role of evaluative language choices in the construction of identity about the key themes of belonging and displacement.

### **Data Source**

The primary data source for this study is the text from the novel *Home Boy* by H.M. Naqvi ([2010], [HarperCollins Publishers India]). This source is used to extract all the excerpts for the textual analysis to allow for precise referencing.

### **Data Selection**

A purposive sampling technique is used to extract the excerpts from the text. The selection criteria included:

- i. Representation of key characters: The excerpts were selected that represented the language, thoughts, and opinions of key characters such as Chuck, AC, and Jimbo.
- ii. Thematic relevance: Excerpts were selected that addressed key themes under investigation—namely, identity crisis, belonging, and displacement in the post-9/11 context.
- iii. Rich evaluative language: Excerpts were selected that were rich in the use of appraisal resources such as attitude, judgment, appreciation, engagement, and gradation to provide substantial data for analysis.

This sampling technique was employed to extract excerpts that were rich in the relevant themes and aspects under investigation, such as evaluative language, identity crisis, sense of belonging, and displacement.

### **DATA ANALYSIS METHOD**

The selected excerpts were analyzed systematically through the Appraisal Theory developed by Martin and White (2005). This involved:

Manual coding of excerpts by extracting examples of Appraisal resources. For this purpose, expressions for the following aspects were identified:

Affect: Characters' feelings and emotions like happiness, sadness, fear, and desire.

Judgment: Assessment of human behaviour according to societal norms, encompassing Social Esteem such as Normality (how unusual someone is) and Capacity (how capable someone is), and Social Sanction such as Veracity (how truthful someone is) and Propriety (how ethical someone is).

Appreciation: Evaluation of objects, texts, and processes in terms of their social value (such as reaction, composition, and valuation).

Expressions of Engagement, to see how a speaker or writer posits their point of view about other voices in the text, and Gradation, to account for how strong and clear characters' voices are by focusing on aspects of Force and Focus, were also coded.

After this, the identified patterns of appraisal resources were subjected to interpretation to see their function in:

- I. Construction of the identities of Muslim immigrants in the USA
- II. Representing their experiences of belonging and displacement

These findings were directly related to the research questions of this study.

### **Analysis and Findings**

Below, here is an Appraisal analysis of chosen excerpts from Naqvi's *Home Boy*. These seven key excerpts offer a representative and yet rich enough dataset that could be used to conduct an in-depth analysis through the lens of Appraisal theory. This enables a proper examination of the research questions under the practical constraints of an article. It examines how the characters' language and attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, Engagement, and Gradation) display their changing sense of belonging, identity, and feelings of being displaced, especially showing the difference before and after 9/11.

#### **Excerpt 1:**

*"We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren't before."* (Naqvi, 2010, p. 1)

#### **ANALYSIS**

The opening lines of the novel explicitly establish how characters experience racial judgments in the post-9/11 scenario. In this sentence, the racial slurs show how the characters were being labeled as others

based on their ethnicity. This clearly illustrates how racial profiling has affected the characters' identity. The statement carries strong negative **Judgement** (Social Sanction – Propriety), suggesting how society now perceives them. They are being prejudiced as morally suspect or unfit socially based on their origin. Simultaneously, they invoke negative **Judgement** (Social Esteem: Normality), making them appear unfit or others in terms of societal norms. Although not explicitly stated, the tone of the statement shows negative **Affect** (Insecurity: Disquiet/Shock) and (Unhappiness: Dismay) through the characters' internal feelings of pain, anger, and confusion that they have been labeled as low, suddenly, and harshly. The stereotypically degraded slurs show the societal devaluation (**Appreciation–valuation**) that reflects how the characters are being perceived in the post-9/11 scenario. There is **Monoglossic engagement** (Unchallenged assertion), as the sentence shows a closed stance. There's no acknowledgment or denial of any voice. It conveys a strong ideological attitude on the imposition of identity by presenting the speaker's interpretation as definitive. However, there is an implicit, implied **Heteroglossic engagement**, critiquing the racial profiling in the harsh societal response. The juxtaposition of "*We'd become...*" with the **Heteroglossic Denial** in "*We weren't before*" forcefully contrasts their current imposed identity with their previous state. This dialogic opposition highlights the unwelcome nature of this shift. The rapid listing of slurs abruptly intensifies the statement (**Gradation – intensification**). The juxtaposition clearly shows that this new state is unwelcome. This blunt listing of slurs and then the denial at the last hardens the tone. This harsh tone amplifies the brutal identity imposition. Thus, linguistically, the opening line is full of evaluative meaning, showing the crisis of belonging and demonstrating how societal judgments force identity construction and reconstruction by showcasing the characters' shock and pain of abrupt displacement.

### Excerpt 2

*"We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo, and me. We were mostly self-invented and self-made, and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic. We [...] had read the Russians, the postcolonial canon, but had been taken by the brash, boisterous voices of contemporary American fiction; [...] we listened to Nusrat and the new generation of native rockers, as well as old-school gangsta rap [...] And we slummed in secret cantons of Central Park [...] weren't rich but weren't poor [...] weren't frum but avoided pork [...] and drank everywhere [...] among the company of women, black, Oriental, and denizens of the Caucasian nation alike."* (Naqvi, 2010, p. 1)

### ANALYSIS

In this excerpt, Chuck, one of the three youngsters, is describing their life before the hateful labels they got in the post-9/11 scenario; he is sharing his perspective, specifically how he and his friends constructed their respectful identities and how smoothly they were merged in the multi-ethnic culture of New York City. He says, '*We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo, and me. We were mostly self-invented and self-made and certain we had our fingers on the pulse of the great global dialectic...*'. From this statement, the positive **Affect (Satisfaction: Confidence)** about their identities is strongly evident. Indeed, he is confessing a strong positive **Judgement (Social Esteem: Capacity)** about their abilities and capacities by calling themselves '*boulevardiers, raconteurs, and renaissance men.*' Through this strongly positive labeling, he is portraying themselves as smart, capable, and highly cultured human beings. Furthermore, by saying "*we had our fingers on the pulse,*" this statement is even more strongly Graduated (**Force: Intensification**), showing their confidence in their identities (RQ1, RQ2).

When it comes to Appreciation, the mention of '*the Russians,*' '*the postcolonial canon,*' '*Nusrat,*' and '*old-school gangsta rap*' is filled with positive **Appreciation (Valuation: Significance / Reaction: Pleasure)**, showing their merging with a wide and diverse range of cultures. Portraying themselves as '*mostly self-*

*invented and self-made'* further invokes positive **Judgement (Social Esteem: Capacity / Tenacity)**, showing that who they are is primarily due to their skills and abilities; they constructed their own prestigious identities. However, the phrase "*fancied ourselves*" also shows their awareness of a degree of performativity in identity construction (**Engagement: Entertain**). Lastly, the statement is somewhat softened by **Gradation (Focus: Softening)** through the phrases '*weren't rich but weren't poor [...] weren't frum but avoided pork.*' This flexible description shows their mixed sense of self and hybrid identity (RQ2, RQ3).

### Excerpt 3

*"How about we check the news, yaar?"*

*'Don't you want to know what's happening?'"*

*'No. Actually, I don't,' AC replied. 'I'm sick of the news, chum. I'll be happy if I never watch CNN again.'* Switching the TV off, he rearranged his crotch. *'Nobody knows what's going on, but everybody's busy parceling myths and prejudice as analysis and reportage. Suddenly everybody's become an expert on different varieties of turbans in the world.'* (Naqvi, 2010, p. 89-90)

### ANALYSIS

AC's refusal, when Chuck wants to check the mainstream news, shows his disappointment in the post-9/11 scenario; indeed, this shows that he wants to cope with the bitter reality of how misinformation is being spread. His words, '*No. Actually, I don't... I'm sick of the news, chum. I'll be happy if I never watch CNN again,*' is evidence of negative **Affect (Dissatisfaction: Disgust/Frustration)**, which is made even stronger through the harshness and intensity of the tone (**Gradation: Force**). This disappointment and frustration of AC stems from the negative prejudice of society. Consequently, he makes a negative **Judgement** about society when he says, '*Nobody knows what's going on,*' because of their perceived inability to understand things and to report the news accurately (**Social Esteem: Capacity**). In addition, he makes the claim that '*everybody's busy parceling myths and prejudice as analysis and reportage*', this is a clear negative **Judgement** about the media, which, in his view, is unable to do its work and bring the truth to the masses (**Social Sanction: Propriety & Veracity**) (RQ1). Thus, he negatively appreciates the media as untrustworthy and biased (**Valuation**).

When it comes to Engagement, AC positions his views and directly refuses (**Disclaim: Denial**) Chuck's idea of watching news, as he says, '*No. Actually, I don't*', thereby shutting down any door for argument. Again, by questioning the working of the mainstream media, AC goes against the general perspective of what is believed about media's authority and the trustworthiness of the news it spreads (**Heteroglossic: Counters**). He makes his perspective even sharper and clearer through **Gradation (Focus: Sharpening)** when he makes a sarcastic comment that '*Suddenly everybody's become an expert on different varieties of turbans in the world.*' This illustrates how culture is often talked about in media, countering outside views (RQ2). By the use of this evaluative language, it is evident how alienated he must feel in a world full of negativity and false stories (RQ3), and how he tries to fight this battle against Western media.

### Excerpt 4

*'This is ridiculous. I want to make my phone call. I know my rights.'*

*"You aren't American!" he fired back. 'You got no fucking rights.'*

*Pausing, he allowed me to process the assertion. The logic was strangely unassailable. I had never thought of it that way and had no reason to."* (Naqvi, 2010, p. 107)

## ANALYSIS

A key moment when Chuck feels a crisis of belonging occurs when he is brutally denied his basic rights. His shouts, *'This is ridiculous. I want to make my phone call. I know my rights'*, clearly show negative **Affect (Dissatisfaction: Indignation)**, feelings of frustration, and anger. He makes a positive Judgement when he claims, *'I know my rights'* (**Social Sanction: Propriety**). But the agent makes a severe negative Judgement when he fires back that *'You aren't American!'* and *'You got no fucking rights'*; this, in turn, categorizes him as an outsider (**Social Esteem: Normality**) and takes away all the legal rights he thinks he had as an American (**Social Sanction: Propriety**). This harsh and brutal tone makes the statement more severe and strong (**Graduation (Force)**) (RQ1, RQ2).

From the Engagement perspective, the agent, by the denial of giving any rights to Chuck, shuts down the argument, as his words are final (**Heteroglossic (Contraction: Disclaim: Deny)**). This statement, through the denial of his American belonging, labels him as an outsider. The next statement, *"The logic was strangely unassailable. I had never thought of it that way and had no reason to,"* shows a sudden change in Chuck, as he unwillingly Appreciates the logic of the agent as *'strangely unassailable'* (**Valuation**); no doubt it's morally and ethically wrong, but this is how it works, and he can't simply question it. Finally, he realizes this bitter idea that the availability of rights depends on where you belong (**Dialogic Expansion (Entertain)**). The acceptance of this unfair logic, that it is *'strangely unassailable,'* Graduates it (**Focus: Sharpening**), highlighting it as clear and unavoidable. So, this is evident how the powerful can control the system by labeling someone as "other," crushing their identity, and making them reconsider where they belong (RQ3).

## Excerpt 5

Grizzly: *You a terrorist?*

Chuck: *No, sir.*

Grizzly: *You a Moslem?*

Chuck: *Yes, sir.*

Grizzly: *So you read the Ko-Ran?*

Chuck: *I've read it.*

Grizzly: *And pray five times a day to Al-La?*

Chuck: *No, sir. I pray several times a year, on special occasions like Eid.*

Grizzly: *You keep the Ram-a-Dan?*

Chuck: *Yes, sir, I usually keep about half, sometimes more but mostly less—*

Grizzly: *D'you eat pork?*

Chuck: *No sir.*

Grizzly: *Drink?*

Chuck: *Liquor? Yes, sir.*

Grizzly: *Won't Al-La get mad?*

Chuck: *I don't think it's all that important to Him, sir, you know, whether I drink or not.*

Grizzly: *(Interrogator scratches cleft of his chin.) What's important to Him then?*

Chuck: *(Subject scratches himself as well. The suit makes him itch.) Well, I suppose ... that I'm good... to people. (Naqvi, 2010, pp. 113-114)*

## ANALYSIS

This excerpt presents the interrogation scene where Grizzly throws quick questions, such as *'You a terrorist? You a Moslem? So you read the Ko-Ran?'*, and Chuck, in return, offers soft replies to gently

resist the stereotypical views imposed on him. Grizzly, by his quick and direct questioning, tries to impose a suspicious identity on Chuck (**Engagement: Dialogic Contraction**). This reflects a negative Judgement that being a Muslim directly links one with danger or threat (**Social Sanction: Propriety**) (RQ2). However, Chuck tries to soften this by the use of Graduation as he responds politely to Grizzly's questions—for instance, 'yes sir,' 'no sir,' 'I pray several times a year,' 'I usually keep about half [of Ramadan], sometimes more but mostly less,' and admitting 'Liquor? Yes'—to resist the religious labeling (**Force: Downtoning**). It is an attempt by him to avoid an all-or-nothing religious devotion and build an identity that further complicates Grizzly's black-and-white views (RQ1, RQ2).

A negative Affect is shown by his discomfort, as the narrator says, 'the suit makes him itch' (**Affect: Discomfort**). Chuck shows positive Engagement when he says that 'I'm good... to people' in an attempt to redefine what God cares about. This shows his positive stance regarding the Judgement of God and then his morals, indicating a sense of self-worth (**Social Sanction: Propriety**). This implies that religion is not all about a strict following of rules; rather, it is all about being a good person (**Appreciation: Valuation**). Through his thoughtful and mediating replies, he takes back control of the conversation as he clears his stance by focusing on morality (**Graduation: Focus**). This shows how people can show resistance to a stereotypical and biased society.

#### Excerpt 6

"Dare you" he cried, jabbing me with his finger [...]. 'Dare you show your face? Do you know how much suffering you are causing?'  
[...] "The FBI came into my house. They were waking up my six-year-old daughter, treating us criminally. They were asking, "What your relationship to the Shehzad boy? You are knowing he is terrorist?"  
Rendered speechless, I hung my head. I felt like bursting into tears.  
'T was trusting in you,' Abdul Karim was saying. 'I was taking you in, giving you work, but you betrayed me! You betrayed us. You are the betrayer.' [...] 'We are decent people. We don't want your types. You go do jihad some other place else!'" (Naqvi, 2010, p. 184)

#### ANALYSIS

One of the most insidious effects of the post 9/11 suspicion is seen within the community of Chuck as he experiences a painful break in the friendship with Abdul Karim. The confrontation of Karim is overwhelmed with strong negative Affect and harsh Judgement. His introductory words, 'Dare you show your face? Do you know how much suffering you are causing?' instantly makes his indignation sizeable. The way Karim describes the visit of the FBI, "They were waking up my six-year-old daughter, treating us criminally. They were asking, What your relationship to the Shehzad boy? You are knowing he is terrorist?"... The response of Chuck, "Rendered speechless, I hung my head. I felt like bursting into tears" was then a strong expression of his negative Affect (Shame/Despair) and emotional breakdown at the reception of these accusations (RQ1).

The later utterances of Abdul Karim, "I was taking you in, giving you work, but you betrayed me! You betrayed us. You are the betrayer" are direct negative Judgments (Social Sanction: Veracity/Propriety), that Chuck is fickle and treacherous. Repetition further **Graduated (Force)** this. His statement, 'We are decent people. We don't want your types. You go do jihad some other place else!' shows **negative Appreciation** and **Judgement (Propriety)** constructs a moral duality, that excommunicates Chuck. The saying, 'your types' is an act of **Graduation** through (**Focus: Sharpening**). That language is a decisive way of creating a boundary because Chuck is referred to as the other and as a result, he is displaced even in his community (RQ2, RQ3) The scene is a heartbreaking example of how a prevailing

logic of suspicion may be adopted and replicated, breaking the relationships within the community and further alienating the main character."

#### Excerpt 7

*"What do you want me to tell you, Ma? That life's changed? The city's changed? ... You know, there was a time when a police presence was reassuring... but now I'm afraid of them. I'm afraid all the time. I feel like a marked man. I feel like an animal. It's no way to live. I want to come home, Ma."* (Naqvi, 2010, pp. 206-207)

#### ANALYSIS

When Chuck talks to his mother about his feelings, it becomes clear he has suffered terrible psychological effects from his experiences and talks about how his life has changed. He begins his chat by saying, *'What do you want me to let you know, Ma? Things that are not the same as before? The city looks different, doesn't it?'* He is showing his feelings through engagement to deflect any possible blame (**Dialogic Expansion**). Most of the pain in the narrator's life comes from intense negative Affect (fear, uncertainty, and worries), which we can see in the sentence, *'I'm actually afraid of the police now. I feel afraid of things all the time.'* His fear is further increased (**Graduation (Focus: Sharpen)**) when he adds, *'all the time.'* It is quite different from when he thought of the police as helpful, which means he now thinks of them as not performing properly (**Social Sanction: Propriety**). As in the novel, when he says, *"The game is rigged and I am a marked man."* Showing no control like animals underlies the feeling of insecurity and being unwelcome rather than accepted: Extreme Affect (**Dehumanizing, Alienating**). Another example is that he feels negative Judgement and believes he does not fit in or is different from others (**Social Esteem: Normality**), demonstrating he no longer feels accepted or valued (RQ1, RQ2).

With *'It's no way to live,'* Chuck is telling the readers he can no longer live this way because it is cruel. When he says, *'I want to come home, Ma,'* it's the high point of all the emotions in the story. It shows his strong yearning for safety, comfort, and once again feeling like he belongs. This part explains how his idea of home has changed and that he rejects his emotions of being an outsider (RQ2, RQ3). The strong feelings in this passage show how much Chuck is affected by his trauma and his desire to leave behind the name and fear he lives with in post-9/11 New York.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In *Home Boy*, Appraisal Theory was used to study the way Naqvi uses language to present each character's sense of belonging, displacement, and personal growth following the events of 9/11. Looking at seven important excerpts has exposed reliable and meaningful usage of Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, Engagement, and Gradation, which answered the study's major questions.

#### Exploring feelings of belonging and displacement in religious individuals (RQ1)

Appraisal resources are strongly proven by the study to help illustrate how the characters' attitudes and emotions change throughout the novel. Before 9/11, feeling good about one's place in the city was mainly how people viewed Pre-9/11 belonging. Looking back to before 9/11, this strong, complete sense of self is quite different from how displacement is shown in the Affect of novels written after 2001. This insecurity and unease are seen in the main character's first experience with being labeled a "Jap" or a "Jew" or a "Nigger" (Excerpt: "We'd become Japs, Jews, Niggers..."). So, the situation results in extreme insecurity: Chuck admits to his mother that he is always afraid (Fear) and shows the sadness and disgrace

(Shame/Despair) that he feels from facing authority and criticism from his neighborhood. The yearning to regain a sense of belonging, near the conclusion, is exquisitely expressed in Affect (Desire: Longing) for home.

Being able to make reliable judgments matters a lot. Charged social sanctions and poor social esteem turn the characters into people others view as weak, strange, and sinful. In turn, individuals like AC use negative evaluation categories (Capacity, Propriety, Veracity) to contest the media's claims (AC complains about the news in his rant). At times, Chuck expresses a positive view of himself (Propriety) in conversations (e.g., responding to an interrogator, "I'm good... to people"), yet these are frequently influenced by the judgment of others. Using evaluative language here highlights how the characters feel and behave as they change their sense of self and where they are.

### **Negotiating and building identities in the aftermath of 9/11 is influenced by how language is used (RQ2).**

Based on the analysis, evaluative language influences the way people create and change their identities in society after 9/11. These hyphenated identities developed during the 1990s with plenty of positive self-regard (Capacity/Tenacity) and wide-ranging appreciations (Excerpt: "We thought we could do anything..."). As a result of 9/11, people exhibit violent reconstruction, leading to the imposition of identities using hurtful labels (e.g. We had become...).

Characters try to represent their identities using different ways of talking. People develop AC's opposing identity by countering common ideas and engaging with opposing movements (Heteroglossic: Counters). Whereas Chuck does resist straightforward discussions by using Gradation (Force: Downtoning), he continues to experience the forceful removal of his identity by other authorities. The way Abdul Karim disowns him and calls him a "traitor" (Excerpt: Abdul Karim confrontation) makes him feel even more disconnected from his old self. His longing to "come home" (Call with Ma) shows that he is moving toward looking for a permanent, though damaged, self-image. Making choices in appraisal brings a painful story of transition from personal agency to outside influences and leaves people struggling for a new sense of self.

### **Examining the journey from belonging to feeling displacement (RQ3)**

Appraisal analysis makes it clear how characters in this novel struggle with questions of identity and belonging. The big difference in how the story is told before and after 9/11 marks the journey as a highly traumatic experience. Both the mind and the body are changed by displacement because negative feelings and labeling ruin what the characters value and rely on. Claiming Chuck doesn't belong because he is not American (Excerpt: "You aren't American!") separates him from any sense of American belonging. Because of all the bad things happening to them, the main characters start to feel cut off from everyone else. It shows how feeling threatened at all times can be expressed using language, shaping people's behavior in public and how they see themselves. So, analyzing how they talk about, think about, and live through belonging and displacement gives us insight into what they feel and do to get through it.

Even though this paper provides a better understanding of identity formation based on Appraisal Theory, there are a few limitations that need to be mentioned. To begin with, the analysis is conducted on a small sample of seven excerpts, which, despite being selected purposely, might not reflect all of the evaluative patterns in the novel. Second, the subjective interpretation is offered by the manual coding of appraisal resources (e.g., Affect, Judgement), even when the coding is carried out according to the framework of Martin and White (2005). Third, Appraisal Theory places the linguistic assessment higher than structural

sociopolitical factors, like systematic racism, which creates an identity crisis. Comparison textual analysis, establishing inter-coder reliability, and employing an interdisciplinary approach (linguistic and critical discourse analysis) could be used to fill these gaps in future research.

This study, which uses Appraisal Theory, highlights how evaluative language in *Home Boy* constructs the relations between identity, belonging, and displacement. The high use of negative Affect and external judgments in the texts after 9/11 adds support to the thematic ideas given by scholars like [Ashfaq & Naeem, (2022)]. It builds on such studies by providing detailed evidence of the emotional tone and how these situations are discussed by speakers. For example, the findings about characters being labeled the "Other" because of negative judgments correspond to what [Iqbal, Ahsan, and Rashid (2023)] explain about Muslims being perceived as the "Other," and this work discusses exactly how such actions are revealed in texts.

The characters try to either accept or challenge the identities given to them, as shown in AC's outburst and Grizzly's exchanges, which support ideas about counter-discourse and identity re-writing mentioned in Rashid, Jabeen, and Shahbaz (2020). Ullah et al. (2021) talk about how the main characters experience being caught between various cultures and the impressions of others on them. From symbolic interactionism, this analysis reveals that this shift appears in different ways in evaluative stances. Likewise, [Ajmal, Rehan, and Kanwal (2024)] point out how Chuck tries to create his moral judgments in opposition to stereotypes. Consequently, this research joins social, cultural, and thematic studies by showing the exact language used to convey these experiences.

Using Appraisal Theory helps uncover these covert yet significant language choices and proves it to be a useful tool for stylistic analysis of literature on trauma, diaspora, and other important social events. It enables a careful analysis of exactly how words are used to reveal personal and cultural intentions.

In essence, we can say that evaluative language in *Home Boy* not only describes the characters' lives, it also actively helps understand how they see things. The shift in Appraisal resources shows how they move from feeling secure and connected to losing their identity and feeling misplaced. Looking at how individuals voice their emotions, judge others, value certain identities, and interact in debates, the research demonstrates the major effects of stereotyping and "othering" during times of fear. Through the choice of words, Naqvi strongly shows the hardships the characters face while hoping for dignity, a sense of self, and an identity. It allows us to value more deeply the colorful style of *Home Boy* and the major role of point of view when describing how people form their identity during adversity.

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