

Implications of the research for understandings of Muslim families and childhoods: a commentary

Muslim families experiences of the education system in England and Scotland seminar, 13th May 2013

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Place matters

Important differences between Scotland and England:

- Diversity, distribution and structure
 - Class differences
- Scottish politics and governance
 - ... what distinguishes Scotland from England is the absence of a racialization of the political process in the period since 1945 rather than an absence of racism *per se* (Miles and Dunlop, 1987: 199).
 - Influence of civic nationalism
 - Unique legislative framework
- Scottish national identities

Negotiating locality

- Relations between and within the home, school and community and how these shape, and are shaped by, young people
- Relations between Muslim children and other children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds
- Negotiating local landscapes and encounters with others (teachers, parents, pupils etc)
- Experiences of being a part of a very small ethnic and religious minority group

Intergenerational relations

- Dominant discourse is one of generational conflict:
 - 'caught between two cultures' - 'on the one hand there is the social world of family, community and religion - while on the other, there is the western world experiences through institutions like education and the media' (Qureshi and Moores, 1999: 318)
- Positive intergenerational changes (in relation to gender, education and employment)
- What about transmission of religious values across and between the generations and the correspondence, compliance, challenge and/or conflict associated with this?

Gender relations

- Young Muslim men represented as:
 - violently patriarchal, unemployed and involved in crime (Archer and Yamashita, 2003), part of the rise of the Asian youth folk devil (Alexander, 2000) and in conflict with their parents generation (Alexander, 2004) (triple pathologised through race, gender and generation)
- Yet also
 - effeminate, more 'middle-class' and 'behavers and achievers' in school (Archer, 2001) fed by the 'apparent stereotype of Asian boys to be physically smaller' (O'Donnell and Sharpe, 2000: 79). Experiencing higher rates of racism at school (Archer, 2001) and as 'failing masculinities' (Alexander, 2000: 236)
- Muslim women represented as the embodiment of an oppressive and fundamentalist religion (and strongly encouraged to pursue local univ. study)

Doing Islam

- Diversity and difference in terms of what it means to be a Muslim and how Islam is lived out and experienced by individuals.
- Debates about what it means to be a 'proper Muslim' (see also Archer, 2003)
- Difference between and focus on 'doing Islam' rather than 'being Muslim'
- What social, political or economic factors have shaped Muslim children's sense of their religious identities?