

Muslim Youth: Challenges, Opportunities **and** Expectations

Friday 20th March – Sunday 22nd March 2009
The University of Chester



Organised by

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (AMSS UK)
THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER

Venue

THE BINKS BUILDING,
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER

Conference Organisers



AMSS UK

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (AMSS UK) is an association based in London and aims to bring Muslim Social Scientists and those interested in the study of Islam together to discuss current developments in the field of Social Sciences and to work towards promoting better understanding and greater interdisciplinary co-operation through publications, conferences, seminars and workshops.

AMSS (UK) Membership: *Regular £25.00 Students £12.50*

All members receive a free subscription to the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)* and *Islamiyat al Marifah* (for Arabic readers only).

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER is one of the oldest providers of higher education in the country, with academic roots stretching back to the early 19th century. The University of Chester was founded in 1839 by a group of prominent local figures, which included Britain's greatest 19th century Prime Minister, William Gladstone, they pre-date all but a handful of other English universities. However, at the University of Chester, change is as important as tradition. During their 168-year history, their fundamental mission of educating students for careers of service has continued to evolve and develop, and they have established a broad range of degree choices, which offer students a high quality experience in a modern and supportive environment.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES attracts motivated students from a variety of backgrounds into programmes where the curriculum matches their needs and aspirations – degrees in Religious Studies, in Christian theology, and in faith-sensitive Youth Work. It offers postgraduate research in disciplines of contemporary religion and theology, including projects matching other research and faith-oriented Centres: for Applied Muslim Youth and Community Studies, for Christian Ministry, for Religion and the Biosciences, and for Religion and Popular Culture. Department staff publish research which is rated of international excellence and also serve with their scholarship local, regional and national faith communities.

THE CENTRE FOR APPLIED MUSLIM YOUTH AND COMMUNITY STUDIES (CAMYCS) seeks to advance scholarship and public awareness of Muslim youth and communities in Britain, Europe and internationally by initiating and engaging in high quality teaching, learning and research activities that will impact locally, nationally and internationally.

Introduction

The modern world presents a series of complex, conflicting scenarios and possibilities for young people and in particular young Muslims. Many Muslim societies display a “youth bulge”, where more than half of their populations are under the age of 25, a demographic reality mirrored in Muslim communities living in the West. An increasingly globalised western culture is rapidly eroding traditional ideas about society, from the family to the state. At the same time, rampant materialism is creating a culture of spiritual emptiness in which demoralisation and pessimism easily find root. For young Muslims these challenges are compounded by a growing sense of alienation as they face competing ideologies and divergent lifestyles. Muslim youth are often idealised as the “future of Islam” or stigmatised as rebelling against their parental values and suffering “identity crises”. These experiences can produce both positive and negative reactions, from intellectual engagement, social interaction and increasing spiritual maturity to emotional rejectionism, immersion in narrow identity politics and violent extremism. However, it is clear that the optimism of most young Muslims is best nurtured in an environment of opportunity, where ambitions and aspirations can exist as an achievable reality. But at the social and political levels, opportunity crucially depends on the existence of both equality and inclusivity, as well as the vision and determination within the community and the establishment to tackle educational underachievement. This conference seeks to discuss the central issues currently facing young Muslims both locally and globally and seeks to engage with academics, educationalists, psychologists, social commentators, youth work practitioners and interested institutions and organisations at national and international levels.

Conference Themes

CONTEXTS

- Classical and modern understandings of youth in Islam
- Theorising Muslim youth
- Contrasting Muslim youth experiences in majority and minority Muslim societies

CHALLENGES

- Globalisation of Western consumer youth cultures
- Detraditionalisation and secularisation
- Reconciling competing demands from home, school, street, and Mosque
- Alienation, marginalisation and discrimination
- Social problems and cultural taboos
- Educational underachievement
- Over-emphasis on a narrow range of occupations
- Issues of well-being and mental health, e.g., happiness/depression, optimism/pessimism, meaningfulness/nihilism
- Disconnection of urban youth from the natural world
- Youth and anti-social behaviour
- Identity, belonging and loyalty
- Vulnerability to violent and extremist ideologies
- Parenting and civic responsibility
- Promoting effective social cohesion and shared values

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

- Planning strategies and tactics for multi-track diplomacy: Engaging, educating and training the Muslim youth
- Building a culture of dialogue and diversity: The role of youth organisations
- Citizen Diplomacy in the era of the Internet: The role of the youth
- Civic engagement and Muslim youth
- The rationale of Public Diplomacy
- Public Diplomacy in the era of the internet
- Public Diplomacy and multi-track diplomacy: Traditional and emerging definitions
- Successful public and cultural diplomacy: Case studies

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reclaiming authentic Islamic spirituality and human values
- Hybridised youth identities
- Youth as agents of positive change and improvement in society as a whole, through
 - a) Proposing constructive solutions instead of being perceived as “a problem”
 - b) Responsible civic engagement
 - c) Building networks with people of goodwill from all communities
 - d) Advocating and promoting social and

economic justice, ethical business, creative philanthropy, stewardship models of management, protection of the environment, etc.

- e) Achieving excellence in professions which influence public opinion and public policy (e.g., the media) and create future opinion formers and thought leaders (e.g., education at all levels)
- f) Becoming role models in caring professions (e.g., health care)
- g) Exploring history education to promote tolerance, and inclusiveness
- h) Driving and articulating key research on social issues

- Visibility and activism of young Muslim women
- Advancement of holistic education to nurture full range of human potential amongst young people – intellectual, aesthetic, physical, moral and spiritual
- Reconnecting with nature and the countryside
- Re-animating an Islamic conception of beauty
- Emerging youth cultures, e.g., ‘Islamic Cool’, i.e., Nasheed and Rap
- Development of new types of religious identity
- Ground breaking service based projects and educational initiatives

Conference Programme

Day 1 • Saturday 21st March 2009

08:30 – 09:15 *Registration*

09:15 – 10:00 **OPENING SESSION**

Qur'an Recitation

OPENING REMARKS

Revd. Dr. Ruth Ackroyd

Head, Dept. of Theology and Religious Studies

Dr. Anas S. Al-Shaikh-Ali

Chair, AMSS UK

Dr. Mohammad S. Seddon

The Centre for Applied Muslim Youth and Community Studies (CAMYCS)

SPEAKERS

Dr. M. G. Khan

(University of Birmingham, UK)

Defining Muslim Youth Work

Dr. Brian Belton

(YMCA George Williams College, UK)

Youth Work and Islam: A Growing Tradition?

Abdul-Azim Ahmed

(Cardiff University, UK)

Those Who Believe and Do Righteous Deeds: An Examination of the Motivation and Ethos of Muslim Youth Work in Wales

10:00 – 10:30 **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

SPEAKER

Dr. Jeremy Henzell-Thomas

Muslim Youth and the Renewal of Core Human Values: The Centrality of Education

12:00 – 12:15 *Tea Break*

12:15 – 13:45 **SESSION 2**

MUSLIM YOUTH: IDENTITIES

CHAIR: **Dr. Rabia Malik**

SPEAKERS

Yahia Baiza

(University of Oxford, UK)

Religion, Language or Ethnicity?

Hybridised Youth Identity Among the Afghan Ismaili Community in Germany

Dr. M. Taqi Tirmazi

(Morgan State University, USA),

10:30 – 12:00 **SESSION 1**

DEFINING MUSLIM YOUTH WORK: THEMES AND ISSUES

CHAIR: **Mohammed Imran**

**Dr. Altaf Husain, Tasanee R. Walsh,
and Dr. Fariyal Ross-Sheriff**

Muslim Immigrant Youth: A
Balancing Act

Mohammed Imran

(Muslim Youth Helpline, UK)
'Alastu bi-Rabbikum? Bala!' Young British
Muslims Fulfilling their Primordial
Covenant in a Tumultuous World

13:45 – 14:45 *Lunch & Prayer*

14:45 – 16:15 PARALLEL SESSION 3A

MUSLIM YOUTH: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRACTICE

CHAIR: **Usra Ghazi**

SPEAKERS

Dr. Rabia Malik

*(Marlborough Cultural Therapy Centre,
UK)*

The Role of Family in the Lives of Young
Muslims

Tafazal Mohammad

(Muslim Youth Skills, UK)

Making Every Muslim Child Matter

Professor Christopher Bagley

(University of Southampton, UK)

and Nader Al-Refai

(University of Derby, UK)

Muslim Youth and Citizenship
Education: Idealism, Islam and Prospects
for Successful Citizenship Education

14:45 – 16:15 PARALLEL SESSION 3B

MUSLIM YOUTH: PARENTING

CHAIR: **Shiraz Khan**

SPEAKER

Dr. Hisham Yahya Altalib

(IIIT, USA)

Parent-Child Relations: A Contemporary
Muslim Perspective

16:15 – 16:45 *Tea Break & Prayer*

16:45 – 18:15 SESSION 4

MUSLIM YOUTH: PERSPECTIVES ON EXTREMISM

CHAIR: **Sadek Hamid**

SPEAKERS

Dr. Saeed A. Khan

(Wayne State University, USA)

The Phenomenon of Dual Nihilism
Among the British Muslim Youth of
Bradford, England

Dr. Tahir Abbas

(University of Birmingham, UK)

“Preventing Violent Extremism”:
The Views of a Muslim Community

Dr. Ihsan Yilmaz

(Fatih University, Turkey)

Why Hizb-ut Tahrir is Influential in
Britain Compared to Other Muslim
Countries?

Navid Akhtar

(Gazelle Media, UK)

Young, Angry and Muslim: Television
Documentary, Channel 4, 2005

Day 2 • Sunday 22nd March 2009

09:00 – 10:30 SESSION 5

MUSLIM YOUTH: ENGAGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

CHAIR: **Dr. M. G. Khan**

SPEAKERS

Dr. Riad Nourallah

(University of Westminster, UK)

The New Diplomacy and Young Muslims: An Inquiry into Emerging Concepts and Potentials

Taskin Tankut Soykan

(OSCE/ODIHR, Poland)

OSCE's Engagement with Youth to Address Intolerance Against Muslims

Maszlee Malik

(Durham University, UK)

Participation as a Means to Good Governance: The Role of Muslim Youths

Usra Ghazi

(Islamica Magazine, Jordan)

Countering Religious Totalitarianism Through Scriptural Diplomacy

10:30 – 10:45 *Tea Break*

10:45 – 12:00 SESSION 6

MUSLIM YOUTH: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

CHAIR: **Taskin Tankut Soykan**

SPEAKERS

Sevinc Alkan Ozcan

(Foundation for Sciences and Arts, Turkey)

A Search for a New Intellectual Paradigm: Foundation for Sciences and Arts (BİSAV: Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı)

Dr. Mekia Nedjar

(University of Madrid, Spain)

Methodological Strategies of Spanish Citizenship: (Re-) Construction of Muslim Youth Challenges and Models from Europe

Laila Kadiwal

(University of Oxford, UK)

'Belonging to the Nation' A Perspective from the Pamir, Tajikistan

12:00 – 12:45 SESSION 7

MUSLIM YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

CHAIR: **Dr. Tahir Abbas**

SPEAKERS

Dr. David Tyrer

(Liverpool John Moores University, UK)

Representations of Student Extremism and the Logic of Islamophobia

Seyfeddin Kara

(Islamic Human Rights Commission, UK)

Experiences of Muslim Youth at British Universities

12:45 – 13:45 *Lunch & Prayer*

13:45 – 15:00 SESSION 8

MUSLIM YOUTH AND NEW MEDIA

CHAIR: **Navid Akhtar**

SPEAKERS

Sughra Ahmed

(The Islamic Foundation, UK)

Emerging Youth Cultures: Young Muslims and Religious Identity

Dr. Ines Braune

(Leipzig University, Germany)

Crossing Borders in Cyberspace: Young Moroccans and the Internet

Magfirah Dahlan-Taylor

(Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA)

‘Baby’ al-Banna: A Case Study of Islamic ‘Teen-Literature’ in Indonesia

15:00 – 15:15 *Tea Break*

15:15 – 16:30 SESSION 9

MUSLIM YOUTH: DEVELOPING POTENTIAL

CHAIR: **Dr. Mohammad S. Seddon**

SPEAKERS

Dr. Musharraf Hussain

(Karimia Institute, UK)

A New Approach to Training Muslim Youth Leaders in the Community

Arif Fitzsimon

(Muslim Youth Foundation, UK)

Training Muslim Youth to be Khateeb

Farid Panjwani and Professor Modjtaba Sadria

(Aga Khan University, UK)

Fragmented Youth, Polyphonic Social Discourses

16:30 – 16:45 CLOSING REMARKS