

From Hijab to Jilbab: young British Muslim women are an 'in-between' generation



Kaye Haw first carried out research with girls in a single sex state school and a private Muslim school in the British Midlands in the early 1990s, against a backdrop of the Rushdie Affair and the Gulf War. In 2008 she returned, funded by the [Religion and Society Programme](#), to re-interview the same Muslim women 15 years on, many now with their own children and in employment. With research assistants from the community, she conducted interviews and observations. Some participants also created video diaries. What had changed? Post-2000, Kaye finds that this generation have become distanced from their parents' positive attitude towards 'British values', and more likely to embrace a Muslim identity. The latter allows them to distance themselves both from the 'cultural' Islam of their parents, and from aspects of British culture which they perceive to be problematic.

Haw suggests that these women form part of a generation who mark a moment within the development of British multicultural society. They are British, they are Muslim, and they are British Muslim. Their identity is in part defined by their active re-construction and re-evaluation of both the traditions they inherited from their parents, and their relationship with British culture.

As young people these women were provided with a strong sense of British identity via their parents' moral embrace of an idea of Britishness based around ideals of tolerance and fairness. As parents themselves they have been confronted by the rise of the 'lad' and 'ladette' culture, and with a growing hostility to Islam, Muslims and that which is perceived as non-British. They have also experienced unprecedented change within their own communities as attitudes to education, work, marriage and the role of women have changed. As these communities have gained confidence in living, working and actively participating in a British multicultural society, they have become more confident in embracing their Muslim identity, and simultaneously become aware of how Muslims are constructed in the media and closer to home. Thus their identity is constructed both through active resistance to critical constructions of Muslims and Islam, and in a critical reaction to many of the beliefs and traditional practices of their parents.

A DVD has been produced drawing upon participants' interviews and the project has attracted follow on funding from the Religion and Society Programme to develop further its impact.

Find out more...

- Listen to podcasts about this project from here: http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/publications/podcasts/show/being_british_and_being_muslim
- Access the videos produced from the project: <http://www.uprg.co.uk/beingandbecoming.php>

- Contact Kaye Haw, especially if interested in obtaining the project's DVD:
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/people/kaye.haw>
- Visit the website for the further impact work developed from the project:
<http://www.beingandbecoming.co.uk/>
- Look up Kaye's articles from the research: 'From hijab to jilbab and the 'myth' of British identity: being Muslim in contemporary Britain a half-generation' on *Race Ethnicity and Education* [Volume 12, Issue 3](#), 2009, pp 363 – 378; 2010 'Being, Becoming and Belonging: Young Muslim Women In Contemporary Britain', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. no 31, no 4, pp 371-387, and a special issue of *Discourse* vol. 32, no 4, 2011, Kaye edited featuring her editorial 'Being Muslim: Education and identities in late modern multicultural societies' and article 'Changing Same' of an 'In-Between' Generation: Negotiating Identities Through Space, Place and Time': <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cdis20/32/4>

You might also be interested in...

- The findings from Jonathan Scourfield's Religion and Society funded project looking at religious nurture in Muslim families in Cardiff:
http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2011_04/1301664676_Scourfield_Phase_1_Large_Grant_BlockLW.pdf
- The Muslim Chaplains Research Project also funded by the Religion and Society Programme and run by Sophie Gilliat-Ray:
<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/share/research/centres/csi/research/muslimchaplaincyproject/index.html>
- Reina Lewis' Religion and Society funded project about modest fashion:
<http://www.fashion.arts.ac.uk/modest-dressing.htm>
- Kaye Haw and colleague Mark Hadfield's website about doing video research:
<http://www.videoandvoice.co.uk/index.html>

Project Details

Award Title

The Myth of British Identity and the Failure of Multiculturalism?: From hijab to jilbab

Team

Principal Investigator: Dr Kaye Haw (Nottingham)

Research Fellows: Samina Din (Nottingham), Shazia Khan (Nottingham)



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



University

University of Nottingham

Award Type

Phase 1 Small Grant

Key terms

women, veil, media, Britishness, identity, generation