

Muslims more successful at enforcing their religion from generation to generation

Posted: Fri, 17 Feb 2012

An academic study by Cardiff University shows that the proportion of adult Muslims actively practising the faith they were brought up in as children was 77%. That compares with 29% of Christians and 65% of other religions.

The study also found that 98% of Muslim children surveyed said they had the religion their parents were brought up in, compared with 62% of Christians and 89% of other religions.

The team analysed data from the Home Office's 2003 Citizenship Survey data, using 13,988 replies from adults and 1,278 from young people aged 11 to 15.

This higher passing on of religion from generation to generation is, the researchers say, because of a higher involvement in religious organisations. The researchers write: "It is well known that there is considerable supplementary education for Muslim children such as the formal learning of the Qur'an in Arabic. The apparently much higher rates of intergenerational transmission in Muslims and members of other non-Christian non-Muslim religions are certainly worthy of further exploration and may in fact pose a challenge to blanket judgements about the decline of British religion.

"These higher rates might suggest support for the theory that for minority ethnic populations, religion can be an important resource in bolstering a sense of cultural distinctiveness." Children are sent to madrassas and mosques to be heavily indoctrinated into Islam.

Co-author of the study, Professor Jonathan Scourfield, added: "Muslim children tend to lead busy lives, often attending religious education classes outside school three or more times each week on top of any other commitments they have.

"They typically learn to read the Qur'an in Arabic. They also learn a great deal about their faith from parents and other family members. Religion can have an especially important role for minority communities in keeping together the bonds between families from the same ethnic background."

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, said: "When one is raised to believe that a particular religion is your whole identity and this idea is heavily reinforced in childhood by constant indoctrination in mosques and madrassas as well as at home by parents who have been similarly brainwashed, then there is little wonder that most Muslims cannot think outside a religious box."

Mr Sanderson said that the Christian churches try to use the same techniques and it is why they are so anxious to take control of education.

"Unfortunately for them," he said, "our society is free and able to explore other avenues and be open to other influences. Muslim societies are very conservative and can deal very severely with anyone who dissents from the central message. When alternatives are assiduously suppressed, there is no wonder that one world view predominates so strongly among Muslims."

The research paper, entitled 'Intergenerational transmission of Islam in England and Wales: evidence from the Citizenship Survey' and Sociology is published by the British Sociological Association.

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