

# DATING



Halal Dating

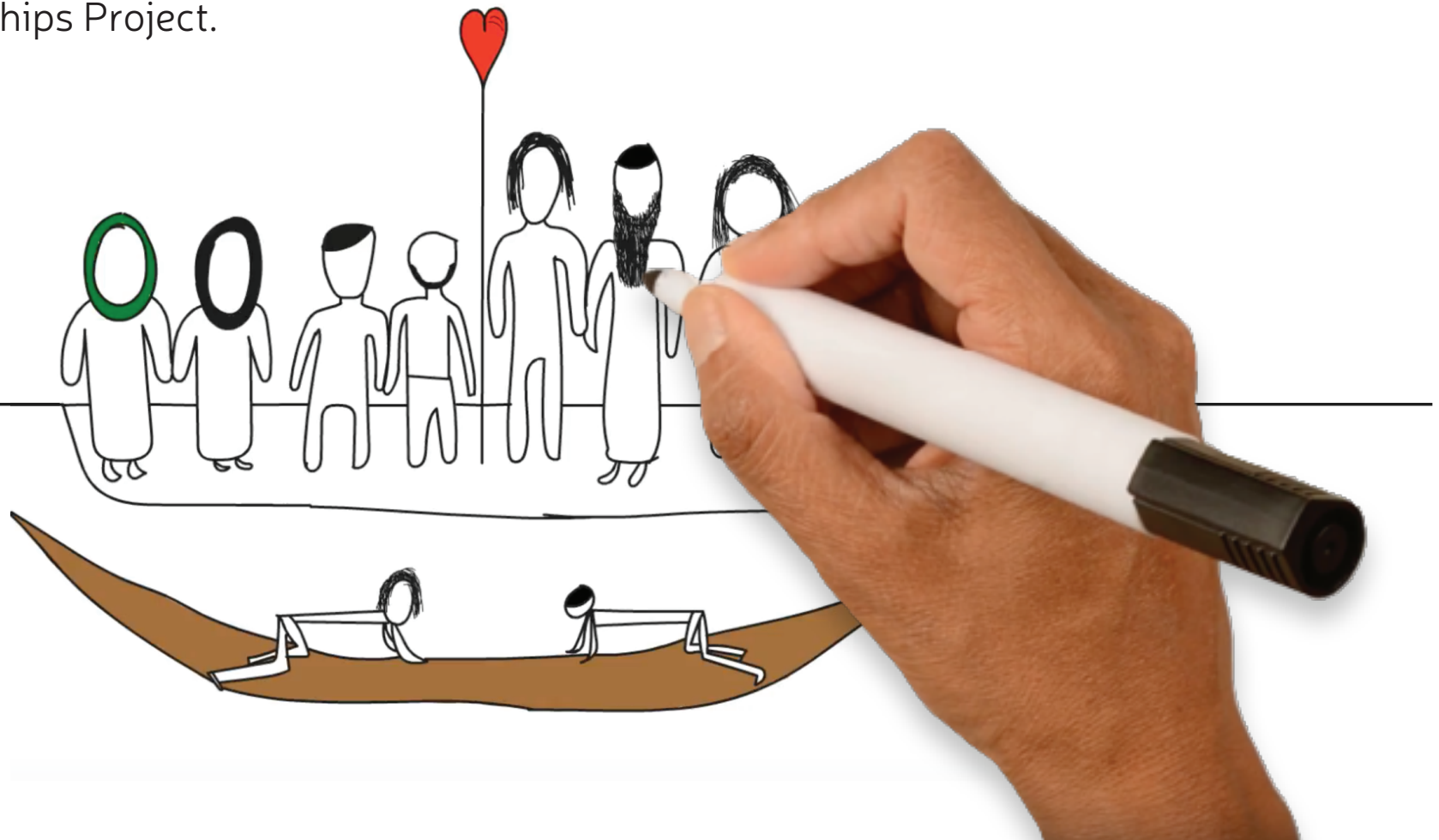
An animation by the  
Storying Relationships Project.



## STORYING RELATIONSHIPS



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.



# ♥ SYNOPSIS

Halal Dating is a short whiteboard animation exploring the opportunities and challenges surrounding getting to know your potential future spouse as a young British Muslim.

The idea of dating as a young Muslim is contentious. Dating is generally considered haram (forbidden), yet the idea of Halal Dating is on the rise. This animation discusses if such a thing is possible, desirable, or useful.



Over a period of five weeks, British Muslim men and women came together with the [Storying Relationships](#) project to create an animation exploring the subject of dating and relationships. Participants involved in the workshops, despite having little experience with drawing or animation, completed the 3 minute film by the workshop's end.

The workshops were facilitated by [Stacy Bias](#) (creator of the documentary animation: [Flying while Fat](#)) and convened by the [Storying Relationships](#) project at the [University of Sheffield](#).

The workshops came after a series of approximately 60 interviews with young British Muslims, which were conducted in Northern England and Scotland, and which explored personal and sexual relationship issues.



Over five workshop sessions participants learned to record and edit interviews into a narrative, to create a soundtrack, employ creative visual metaphor practices and sketch storyboards. Finally, they dove into design and animation software, creating their own original moving images.

Local filmmakers involved in the production of this film include; Arusa Ahmed, Sonyia Jamal, Maryah Khan, Mohammed Barber and Anas Makda.

**PROCESS** 

# ♥ PROJECT

The **Storying Relationship Project** asks how young British Muslims, particularly those with Pakistani heritage, talk and think about their personal relationships. Particular attention is paid to relationships issues that may be specific to these groups, and linked to culture or religion.

It explores the role of stories and storytelling in this, focusing on relationship stories that are told in everyday life (with friends, for example) and also media such as fiction, films and radio. It investigates existing stories and also involves participants in making and sharing new stories.

The study reflects some of the diversity of British Pakistani Muslims and takes place in three areas: Yorkshire, Glasgow, and Tyne and Wear.

## Project researchers include:

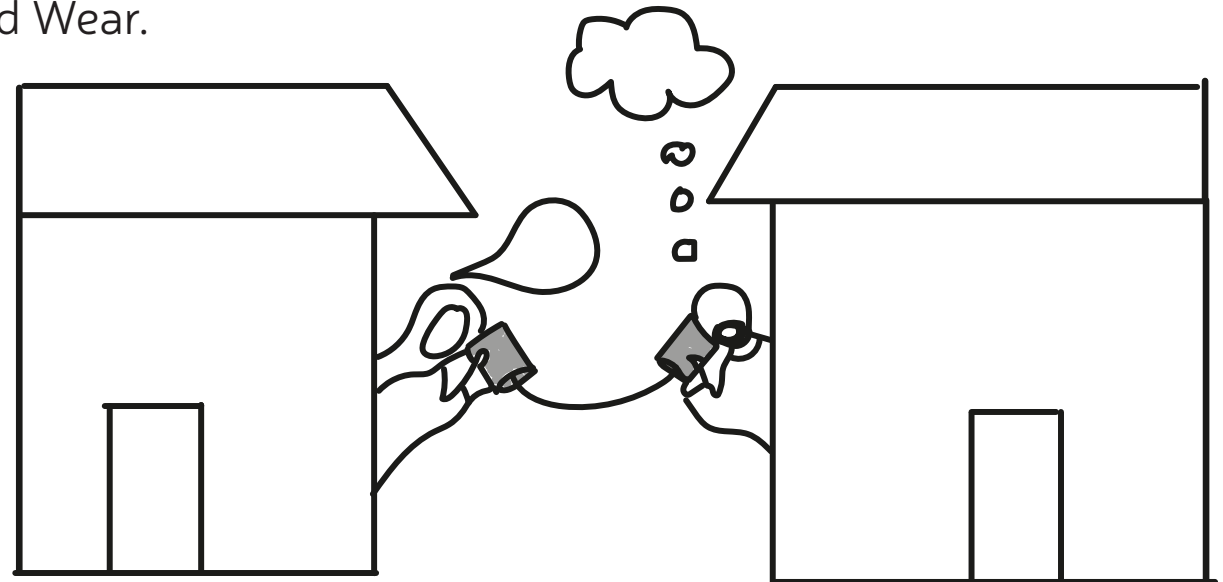
Nafhesa Ali  
Richard Phillips  
Claire Chambers  
Raksha Pande  
Peter Hopkins



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Arts & Humanities  
Research Council





# LINKS

**Halal Dating: Animation**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_l9bHRgttqs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_l9bHRgttqs)

**The Storying Relationships Project**

<https://sheffield.ac.uk/storyingrelationships>

**Project Leader: Richard Phillips, University of Sheffield**

[https://sheffield.ac.uk/geography/staff/phillips\\_richard/index](https://sheffield.ac.uk/geography/staff/phillips_richard/index)

**Research Associate: Dr Nafhesa Ali, University of Sheffield**

[https://sheffield.ac.uk/geography/staff/phillips\\_richard/index](https://sheffield.ac.uk/geography/staff/phillips_richard/index)

**Co-Investigator: Dr Claire Chambers, University of York**

<https://www.york.ac.uk/english/our-staff/claire-chambers/>

**Co-Investigator: Prof Peter Hopkins, Newcastle University**

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/gps/staff/profile/peterhopkins.html>

**Co-Investigator: Dr Raksha Pande, Newcastle University**

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/gps/staff/profile/rakshapande.html>



# FAQs

## **Do young Muslims date?**

The assumption is that Muslims do not date. However, young Muslims on the Storying Relationships project have shared their thoughts, feelings and experiences of dating and some have dated, or had relationships.

## **Do young British Muslims have boyfriends or girlfriends before they marry?**

Many do. They are not always open about this with families, but some will tell their friends.

## **What about Muslims who are gay or lesbian?**

Some of the young people we interviewed told us they are gay or lesbian and that they are out to some friends and family members. Some have same-sex boyfriends or girlfriends. But those we spoke to, unlike their straight friends and siblings, did not describe these relationships as halal.

## **Is dating allowed for Muslims?**

No. Yes? Maybe. Dating is a contentious term and is not used by Muslim communities as it is impermissible (haram) to date before marriage. Courtship often implies dating without intimacy and this is potentially a more acceptable word, but not necessarily an acceptable behaviour for young Muslims.

## **Who decides whether young British Muslims date?**

Families often find their child a suitable partner for marriage. However, due to the difficulties of finding a suitable partner young British Muslims are seeking alternative routes. So for the younger generations this term may be more acceptable. Our research found that many young British Muslims are seeking to make their own decisions about what is religiously permissible. Doing so, they are adapting British relationship ideas to their faith and community.

## **How do young British Muslims date?**

For many young Muslims there is an expectation that they will marry, and dating or getting to know someone with the intention to marry is often the case. However, there are gender differences within this and men and women may enter relationships with different intentions. Halal dating is often a way in which young British Muslims can get to know someone better and decide whether they are a suitable person as a potential partner.

*"(...) if you think it's going to lead somewhere ... I don't think it's appropriate to just like mess around or just do dates for the sake of it. If you see like an end goal in it then I think it's fine"* Aliya, 16 years old, Yorkshire.

## **How is this different to how other (young) people date?**

When Muslims date, differences are highlighted through the way in which religious and cultural expectations shape behaviour. For example, intimacy before marriage is not religiously permissible (halal). Therefore, many may not experience dating or an intimate relationship before marriage. There are also expectations from the wider community about not dating and therefore if a young Muslim couple are seen dating they may anticipate or experience judgment.

## **What is, if at all, considered halal dating?**

Halal dating is 'permissible' dating which is done in religiously acceptable ways, such as without pre-marital intimacy and/or meeting with a chaperone. Phrases like "getting to know someone", or "talking" are often the types of dating halal dating includes. This is a concept more British Muslims are adopting, in which the difficulties of finding a partner the traditional way through family, and or not knowing someone before marriage is being addressed.

## **How do different generations within the British Muslim community view (halal) dating?**

Older parents do still hold onto the view that dating is impermissible (haram), whereas some younger Muslims see this as something they may do either, where parents are unaware that they are dating or when they are 'halal' dating following particular boundaries (e.g. no intimacy before marriage), or dating with the parent's knowledge after an engagement or marriage.

## **Why do we need to talk about (halal) dating?**

To raise discussion and debate on the changing attitudes and practices to how young Muslims are finding their potential partner, other than arrange or introduction marriages and the families finding potential partners. Also, to share that some young Muslims do date and that the taboo around dating can be broken as this is a term that young Muslims use to describe their relationship practices.