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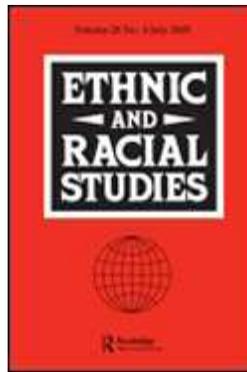
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**Young people's attitudes towards Muslims in Sweden**

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## Young people's attitudes towards Muslims in Sweden

### Abstract

*With the use of multiple regression technique, the principal objective of this study is to clarify and examine young people's attitudes towards Muslims, and the relationships between these attitudes and a large number of background factors. We use a representative sample of 9,498 non-Muslim youths between 15–19 years of age. The main results show that when controlling for several background variables simultaneously, the country of birth, socio-economic background and school/program factors all have an effect on the attitude towards Muslims. Moreover, socio-psychological factors, the relationship to friends and the perceptions of gender role patterns are found to be important. In addition, local factors like high levels of unemployment, high shares of immigrants in a local environment also have an effect. No differences in the attitudes of boys and girls were found. Further, the study establishes a correlation between negative attitudes and right-wing populist seats in local government.*

**Keywords:** Islamophobia, Attitudes, Racism, Youth, Culturalization, Ethnic Minorities

## Introduction

The Swedish Muslim population increased substantially during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although Sweden has no statistical records by religion, it is estimated that the number of individuals with a Muslim background has increased from a couple of families in the 1950s, via approximately 100,000 at the end of 1980s, to approximately 400,000 individuals in 2007.<sup>1</sup> The majority has come to Sweden as refugees or as family to refugees, only a small part as labour migrants. There is also an increasing Swedish born Muslim population. Approximately one third of the Muslim population is of school age or younger (Anwar, Blaschke and Sander 2004).

To become integrated into another society, economically, socially, politically and culturally takes time. To evaluate and translate prior educational credentials and labour market experience can be a long process. For some, economic integration has gone better than for others. Bosnians, generally having a Muslim background, is one of the immigrant groups in Sweden with highest labour market attachment despite a relatively short stay in the country. For immigrants from Iraq, mainly Muslims, on the contrary, we find low employment rates (Bevelander and Lundh 2007). It is obvious that Muslims are not a homogeneous group in Sweden. Rather, the Muslim population have diverse backgrounds when it comes to ethnicity, citizenship, educational history, class, etc, but Muslims are often ethnified, i.e. turned into an ethnic group and ascribed a homogeneous culture (Roy 2004). Strong evidence suggests that especially Muslims are perceived as a religiously distinct group by non-Muslims in Sweden. To be categorised as religiously different can create barriers and aggravate daily life and can lead to lower chances in the housing- and labour market (Carlsson and Rooth 2006). Sometimes structures in laws,

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3 educational systems and other societal sectors cause religious minorities to get into  
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5 difficult situations (Otterbeck 2004), for example regarding religious rules on slaughter of  
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7 animals or religious education. At the same time the Swedish society slowly adapt to the  
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9 demographic changes in an ongoing process (Otterbeck and Bevelander 2006).  
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13 Due to this new demographic situation and to the rising discussions about racism  
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15 and Islamophobia, the Living History Forum and the Crime Preventing Board in Sweden  
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17 conducted a major questionnaire resulting in a report (*Intolerans* 2004). The empirical  
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19 material was rich and complex and it was decided that a second wave of analyses was to  
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21 be conducted. This article is one of the results of that effort.  
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25 The main aim of this article is to study the attitudes of non-Muslim youth in  
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27 Sweden on Muslims. Furthermore, since few studies have been conducted in a more  
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29 explorative way, this study will explore to what extend these attitudes could be explained  
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31 by a number of background factors (a) demographic factors, (b) socio-economic factors,  
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33 (c) local/regional factors, (d) school factors, (e) psychosocial factors, (f) parental factors,  
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35 (g) friend factors, (h) exclusion factors and (i) gender factors.  
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### 41 **Theory and earlier research**

42  
43 A number of theoretical propositions have been brought forward to explain the  
44  
45 mechanisms behind negative or positive attitudes towards others and more extreme  
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47 variations of this like xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia. Below, some crucial  
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49 theoretical concepts which stem from the individual level, the group level or the societal  
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51 level is given, followed by an account of some studies with focus on attitudes towards  
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53 Muslims.  
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*The individual level*

One of the most well known studies focusing on individual prerequisites and characteristics is Adorno et al. (1950). This study connects the so called authoritarian personality to anti-democratic behaviour combined with anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism, etc. A more recent variation of this theory was proposed by Tajfel who developed the so called social identity theory (Tajfel 1982). It presents the idea that ethnocentrism, negative attitudes and discrimination is based on the tendency individuals have to categorize themselves in so called 'in' and 'out' groups. This in turn depends on a deeper need to get or uphold status which can be achieved by comparing in- and out-groups. The more an individual identifies with his/her in-group, the stronger negative attitude he/she will have to an out-group. However, this theory does not explain divergence in attitudes between different out-groups (for example different immigrant or ethnic groups). Neither does it explain why certain individuals systematically have a higher negative attitude than others.

Studies of youth active in right wing movements or, at least, circles, tend to stress that these youths long to identify with a strong in-group excluding out-groups members in harsh ways. These youths tend to have a long history of failure in school, have parents with lower education than average, tend to feel alienated by the middle class ideals governing schools and tend to object to these ideals in a countercultural way (*Intolerans* 2004).

Other theories concentrate on the development of attitudes in adolescence and concentrate on the personal development of the individual. Robinson et al. (2001) stress

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3 the importance of socialization and especially parental practices (not only verbal  
4 tolerance) and education for the development of a 'tolerant' mind. Further, young  
5 adolescents seem to be more negative towards those holding opposing beliefs than older  
6 adolescents who tend to be more open and understanding. At the same time individuals  
7 do not either hold positive or negative attitudes according to Robinson et al (2001), both  
8 attitudes coexist in all individuals. Rather, attitudes are situational.  
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### 20 *Group and societal level*

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22 A more sociological explanatory concept is the so called realistic conflict theory which  
23 stresses real conflicts of interests between groups and competition for scarce resources  
24 like education, employment and housing (Sherif 1966). A development of this theory is  
25 the so called power-threat-hypothesis. According to this, a negative attitude towards  
26 certain groups is due to that these groups are seen as economic competitors and challenge  
27 the social and political power of another (Blalock 1967). A more socio-ecological  
28 variation emphasizes the environment individuals live in and is more or less a variation of  
29 the power-threat-hypothesis. A feeling of threat increases with immigration of new  
30 groups. These groups become more visible which diminishes the social distance to the  
31 majority. When the symbolic dominance is felt to be threatened, racism and negative  
32 attitudes flourish. For example, visibly religious otherness might be perceived as a threat  
33 (McLaren 2003).  
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51 A variant of the above is called defended neighbourhoods theory which states that  
52 a fear of losing ones identity increases with a faster pace of change in neighbourhood  
53 composition (Dustmann, Fabbri and Preston 2004). Finally, and in contrast to the rather  
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3 negative focus of Dustmann et al. (2004), according to Allport's contact hypothesis  
4 attitudes towards other groups are more positive when contacts between groups increase,  
5 especially when individuals have the same socio-economic background and try to obtain  
6 the same goals (Allport 1958). This theory has generated much discussion and  
7 suggestions about the kind and the quality of the contact needed if a positive result is to  
8 be gained. Researchers tend to agree that especially having friends among the ones who  
9 are constructed as the other, tend to be strongly associated with positive attitudes  
10 (McLaren 2003).  
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#### 24 *Structural level*

26 Another set of theories is based on a more structural understanding of prejudices and  
27 racism. The theories attempt to uncover how economic, political and social power over  
28 states and institutions (re)produce discursive orders, benefits and resources along ethnic,  
29 racial, cultural, religious or other lines, securing the power position of a presumed elite  
30 (see for example *Integrationens svarta bok* 2006). These theories often focus on how  
31 cultures (and religions) are essentialised, seen as separate from each other, and finally are  
32 ordered in hierarchies (Fredrickson 2002). A common trait is that theories on racism  
33 today often stress the focus put on culture, rather than race, and how culture is made the  
34 functional equivalent of race in the sense that it becomes inherent in the individual  
35 classified as belonging to a specific culture (Balibar 2002; Solomos and Back 1999).  
36 These orders, at times invisible but always present, saturate public discourse and are  
37 manifested in stereotypes, jokes, popular culture but also in laws, politics, and  
38 discrimination on the labour and housing market. The orders often have long histories  
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3 and are in the West European and North American case more often than not connected  
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5 with the colonial period. Thus, while the studies above focus on personal characteristics  
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7 or interpersonal relations, these theories focus on well spread discourses and power  
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9 relations with a long history.  
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### 12 13 14 15 **Attitudes to Islam and Muslims**

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17 Earlier quantitative research on attitudes towards Islam and Muslims in Sweden is  
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19 primarily on the adult population. The first study was done in 1990 by Hvitfelt (1991).  
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21 He found that almost 65 per cent of the population was fairly to very negative towards  
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23 Islam. 88 per cent was of the opinion that the Islamic religion was incompatible with the  
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25 democratic system and 62 per cent had the view that the religion led to female repression.  
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27 Finally, 53 per cent were of the opinion that the immigration of Muslims should be  
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29 reduced. Hvitfelt's study makes use of bivariate analysis but refrains from theoretical  
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31 explanations apart from vague references to negative stereotypes in media and studies on  
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33 prejudice. The conclusion is that higher education, female sex and younger age generally  
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35 leads to a higher degree of positive attitudes of Islam, but that even the more positive  
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37 were rather negative. However, this study was performed in connection with a period, the  
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39 late 1980s, in which the non-European immigration had increased dramatically which  
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41 affected the discussion about Muslims. For example, certain members of the new right  
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43 wing populist political party, New Democrats (Ny Demokrati), claimed the increased  
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45 number of Muslims were a threat against Swedish culture and prosperity.  
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53 Later studies are mainly commissioned by the Swedish Integration Board  
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55 (Integrationsverket). *The Integration Barometer* (2005 and 2006), studied the attitudes of  
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3 the general public with the use of a couple of indicators. These studies show that the ones  
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5 who have a more positive attitude towards Muslims and Islam are women more than  
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7 men, individuals living in large cities more than those living in smaller cities or the  
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9 country side, and those with higher educated more than the ones with lower educated.  
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11 This study also measured an age effect: the younger the respondents, the more positive  
12  
13 towards Muslims and Islam. One question is similar to Hvitfelt's study. In *The*  
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15 *Integration Barometer* 39 per cent (2005) and 37 per cent (2006) of the respondents think  
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17 that Muslim immigration should be restricted, compared to 53 in Hvitfelt's. Otherwise,  
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19 most questions in *The Integration Barometer* are about Muslims rather than about Islam  
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21 as in Hvitfelt's. This seems to have the effect that the attitudes are not as harsh. It is also  
22  
23 possible that the population has grown more accustomed to Muslims during the 15 years  
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25 that has passed between the questionnaires and that this might have had an effect.  
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32 The results of the Swedish studies on attitudes are largely in line with those found  
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34 in Germany and Switzerland. The theoretical base of *The Integration Barometer*  
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36 primarily stems from Wilhelm Heitmeyer's research, *Deutsche Zustände* (2002, 2003,  
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38 2004 and 2005). These studies operate with ideas on social dominance similar to the  
39  
40 meso-level theories mentioned above and also with theories on authoritarian  
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42 personalities. Heitmeyer found that men had a less positive attitude towards Muslims  
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44 than women. Furthermore, a more negative attitude was measured with increased age and  
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46 a more positive with increased education. Political affiliation showed that individuals  
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48 more to the right had less positive attitude than those more to the left, who were more  
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50 positive. Higher levels of unemployment and a larger share of immigrants living in the  
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52 different states were correlated with a less positive attitude towards Muslims. In the latest  
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3 study a difference between 'east' and 'west' Germany is observed, with a more negative  
4 attitude towards Muslims by people living in 'west'. In addition, it shows that individuals  
5 that are more affected by social dominance, e.g. the feeling that one's existence is  
6 becoming less secure by the settlement of others, are less positive to Muslims. Finally,  
7 individuals with authoritarian perceptions also held slightly more negative attitudes to  
8 Muslims than others. For Switzerland, Cattacin et al. (2006) found that approximately 30  
9 per cent of the population had Islamophobic attitudes, which is slightly higher than for  
10 Germany (20–25 per cent). Moreover, Cattacin's study found little correlation between  
11 Islamophobia and racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.  
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24 To our knowledge only one study for the Netherlands focussing on youth and  
25 attitudes towards Muslims and Islam is conducted (Dekker, van der Noll and Capelos  
26 2007). In this study, 581 students in the age of 14–16 were asked about their opinions  
27 about Islam and Muslims, but also about individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent.  
28 54 per cent were negative towards Muslims. Lack of positive, direct contacts with  
29 Muslims was seen as the most important factor for this result. Other factors explaining  
30 the result were if the individuals held negative stereotypical ideas about Muslims, got  
31 negative messages by family and friends about Muslims, or had the conviction that  
32 Muslims and Islam were a threat to security.  
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46 The only study for Sweden that has focused on attitudes on Muslims by young  
47 people is the already mention report *Intolerance* (Intolerans 2004). Using the same  
48 questionnaire as the present article, the Intolerance report tried to measure the attitudes of  
49 young people in Sweden towards Muslims, Jews, homosexuals and immigrants. Contrary  
50 to earlier studies and certainly compared to the study performed in 1990 by Hvitfelt, this  
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3 study showed that young people generally had rather positive attitudes. Only 5 per cent  
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5 had negative attitudes, out of which 1.7 per cent was extremely negative. When it comes  
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7 to attitudes specifically towards Muslims, 8 per cent had negative attitudes. Moreover,  
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9 this study also tried to link a number of background factors with a so called intolerance  
10  
11 measure. Cross tabulations showed that individuals with more negative attitudes towards  
12  
13 Muslims were for example: boys, youth having parents with lower socio-economic  
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15 background, youngsters that are enrolled in lower level educational programs, young  
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17 people living in the country side and those born in Sweden. Like earlier studies this study  
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19 did not make use of more sophisticated statistical methods. The design of the  
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21 questionnaire is however thoroughly based in micro and meso-level theories on attitudes  
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23 with clear references to Heitmeyer's study and to Scandinavian studies on racist and  
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25 prejudiced attitudes of youth.  
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32 Other studies have discussed the representation of Islam. According to a number  
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34 of research reports, youth in Sweden live in a media climate that is not particular  
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36 sympathetic towards Islam. For example, the news, popular culture and textbooks are  
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38 often being accused of superficial portrayals of Islam (Berg 1998; Hvitfelt 1998;  
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40 Otterbeck 2005; Kamali 2006). In brief, when Islam is seen as something negative (which  
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42 is not always the case) it is presented as a threat, uniform, undemocratic, patriarchal and  
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44 different.  
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49 The above discussed societal factors, an increasing population with a Muslim  
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51 background and the relatively slow economic integration process of some Muslim  
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53 groups, a relatively negative media climate on Muslims and Islam, as well as the fact that  
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3 relatively few studies have been undertaken on this subject, makes studies on the attitudes  
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5 of the majority on the Muslim minority of great importance.  
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### 10 **Data, model and method**

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12 The data used is based on classroom questionnaire performed during the month of  
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14 December 2003 among pupils in the two highest levels of primary school and the three  
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16 following levels at upper secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> The individuals that answered the  
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18 questionnaire are pupils between the ages 15–19. Cluster sampling on the total population  
19  
20 in these ages was used to have an equal number of primary and secondary schools as well  
21  
22 as having schools from different parts of the country. The total sample consists of 230  
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24 schools, 762 classes and 13,898 individuals. Classes that would not be in the study as  
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26 well as internal drop out left us with a basic material that comprises a representative  
27  
28 sample of 10,599 individuals. This is approximately 2 per cent of the total population in  
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30 these age categories in Sweden. Of these, 565 individuals have indicated that they are  
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32 Muslims and are therefore excluded from the analyses. An internal reduction of 536  
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34 individuals who have not answered all questions used in this analysis, does that the  
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36 material for our analysis comprises 9,498 individuals, 5,680 girls and 4,818 boys.<sup>3</sup>  
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44 The dependent variable is a constructed attitudinal scale or index based on eight  
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46 separate statements indicating a more positive or negative attitude towards Muslims. In  
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48 appendix I these separate statements are given as well as the means, percentages for the  
49  
50 five answering alternatives and standard deviations for girls and boys. The answering  
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52 alternatives on these statements were: yes, this is correct; this is relatively correct;  
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54 unsure/doesn't know; this is rather incorrect; no, this is incorrect. Since a large  
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3 correlation in the answers between the statements could be measured, an attitude index is  
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5 made.<sup>4</sup> The index is constructed so that an increasing level indicates a more positive  
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7 attitude towards Muslims.  
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10 The independent variables<sup>5</sup> are based on the questions asked in the questionnaire  
11 and to a large extent formulated in line with the earlier discussed theoretical propositions  
12 at the individual, group and societal level. Some of these questions are dealing with  
13 *demographic characteristics* like age, gender and country of birth, whereas others are  
14 connected to the *socio-economic background* of the respondents. In this case the  
15 socioeconomic status of the parents, split in eight categories, was used, if the individual  
16 lives in a single-parent family or not and if one or both parents were unemployed were  
17 used as indicators for socioeconomic background. According to earlier studies and the  
18 above mentioned theories, we expect that increased age, being a girl, being born outside  
19 Sweden and having a higher socio-economic background is correlated with a more  
20 positive attitude towards Muslims. If one or both parents are unemployed and if the  
21 adolescent lives in a single parent household should lead to economic stress in the family  
22 and is expected to have a negative effect on the attitude towards Muslims. *Local and*  
23 *regional factors* are primarily based on which municipality an individual lives in.  
24 Moreover, this variable is categorized in various ways to 'catch' different aspects  
25 assumed to be connected to attitudes towards Muslims. This variable is categorized in  
26 type of municipality<sup>6</sup>, level of unemployment in municipality, share of foreign born  
27 population in municipality, the relative share of the manufacturing sector in the  
28 municipality and finally a dummy variable constructed on the basis of if a municipality  
29 had right wing populist mandates in local parliament or not.<sup>7</sup> The local and regional  
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3 indicators are assumed to measure differences in regional and local context of the  
4 individual. Economic stress factors at this level and a more negative regional/local  
5 attitude towards immigrants in general is expected to be measured by these included  
6 variables. In other words, we expect a correlation between increased negative attitudes  
7 towards Muslims and the higher the unemployment rate is, the higher relative share of the  
8 manufacturing sector in the municipality is, as well as the higher the percentage of  
9 immigrants living in the municipality is. Individuals living in municipalities with a right  
10 wing mandate in local parliament are expected to be more negative towards Muslims.  
11 *School factors* like how comfortable the pupil is at school and the respondent's grade  
12 level are included as index variables. The kind of program the respondent is following,  
13 categorized in four levels, is also integrated in the model. This variable is assumed to  
14 catch the effect of socioeconomic background on the level of attitudes towards Muslims.  
15 According to earlier studies, these variables certainly have a strong connection to the  
16 socioeconomic background of the parents (Lange and Westin 1981). Moreover, *social*  
17 *psychosocial indicators* are all index questions and constitute the following:  
18 aggressiveness, restlessness, risk preference and nervousness. These factors are assumed  
19 to measure the individual psychosocial behaviour of the adolescents. The expectation is  
20 that the more aggressive, restless, risk preferable and nervous the individual is, a more  
21 negative attitude towards Muslims should be measured. Other indexes included in the  
22 model deal with *parental factors* which is assumed to measure contact between parents  
23 and adolescents. Here it is expected that a 'better' parent contact of the adolescent is  
24 connected to a more positive attitude towards Muslims. *Friend factors* are assumed to  
25 measure the influence of friends on behaviour. We measure general friend relations with  
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3 an index and this factor is assumed to measure the effect of friends on the attitude  
4 towards Muslims. Better friend relations in general are expected to be connected to a  
5 more positive attitude towards Muslims. Moreover, we also measure if the individuals  
6 know a Muslim (or Muslims) personally. This variable is assumed to measure a better  
7 knowledge about individuals having Islam as religion and we expect that those who know  
8 a Muslim are more positive towards Muslims than those who do not know a Muslim. To  
9 know (in Swedish 'att känna') is a broader category than to have as a friend. Still it is a  
10 neutral to positive expression when you state that you know someone, which is less likely  
11 to say of someone you dislike. Societal belonging at a general level is measured by  
12 inclusion of the question if the respondent has *feelings of exclusion from society*. It is  
13 expected that a higher belonging is correlated with a more positive attitude towards  
14 Muslims. Finally, *gender role patterns* are included and assumed to measure if attitudes  
15 towards gender role patterns are congruent with attitudes towards Muslims. It is expected  
16 that more traditional gender role patterns is connected to more negative attitudes towards  
17 Muslims if the attitude is based on a general xenophobia. But if it is rather based on  
18 specific stereotypes about Muslims and Islam generally including the idea of Muslim  
19 men and Islam as utterly misogynic and Muslim women as oppressed one ought to find a  
20 correlation between progressive attitudes to gender roles and a negative attitude to  
21 Muslims.<sup>8</sup>

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48 Many questions in the questionnaire that are included in the model are on an  
49 ordinal level and recoded to scales with the use of factor analysis. With the use of  
50 multiple regression technique, OLS, we estimate the effect of the various variables on the  
51 constructed index of attitudes towards Muslims. Variables based on constructed indexes  
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3 are standardized. The model presented in the analysis includes all variables presented  
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5 earlier as well as a separate analysis for girls and boys.  
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### 10 **Results of Multivariate analysis**

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12 In the following table (table 1) the results of three regressions are presented which  
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14 include all background variables. The first regression shows the results for both girls and  
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16 boys. Given that earlier studies showed a difference in attitudes towards Muslims by sex  
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18 the second and third regression is for girls and boys separately. The results indicate that  
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20 some variables have no statistical significant effect on the attitude towards Muslims by  
21  
22 young people, whereas other variables show either positive or negative effects. In the  
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24 following we discuss the results by variable group.  
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32 (Table 1 about here)

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34 *Demographic factors:* When it comes to age/grade the results of the regression for both  
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36 girls and boys show few differences in effect of age/grade on the attitude towards  
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38 Muslims. With the exception of those who attend the highest grade of secondary  
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40 schooling (consequently also age) no significant effect could be measured on the attitude  
41  
42 towards Muslims, which is in line with the means shown in the earlier section. However,  
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44 the regressions for girls and boys separately show that for boys attending the second year  
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46 of secondary schooling, a significant positive effect is measured. Girls attending the  
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48 highest level of primary schooling have also a significant positive attitude towards  
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50 Muslims.  
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3 Boys born outside Sweden have a more positive attitude towards Muslims relative  
4 to boys born in Sweden. We also found that girls born outside of Europe have a more  
5 positive attitude towards Muslims than those born in Europe. Moreover, youth who  
6 knows a Muslim has a significantly more positive attitude towards Muslims relative to  
7 somebody who does not know a Muslim. Also, individuals born outside Sweden and  
8 especially those born in southern Europe and outside Europe know a Muslim far more  
9 often than individuals born in Sweden. A possible explanation for these results could be  
10 that young people from outside Europe to a larger extent are living in areas and attend  
11 schools with relatively more Muslims.  
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24 Interestingly, the results indicate no difference in attitude towards Muslims  
25 between boys and girls. This is different from what was measured in the earlier discussed  
26 descriptive section. This result is mainly due to the inclusion of the variable stereotypical  
27 gender role ideas in the model.  
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34 *Socioeconomic factors:* While we assume a more stepwise, 'the higher, the more  
35 positive', connection between attitudes and socioeconomic background, the regressions  
36 presented in the table show that only pupils with parents having academic occupations  
37 have a more positive attitude towards Muslims. For all other occupations we find no  
38 statistically significant effect. Boys living in single parent families have a more negative  
39 attitude towards Muslims than those who live with both parents. For girls no significant  
40 effect of this variable could be measured.  
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50 *Local and regional factors:* In earlier reports it is indicated that the more urban  
51 environment a person is living in, the more positive one is towards Muslims. As  
52 described in an earlier section, this study uses a different geographical division for region  
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3 of living and finds for boys no statistically significant difference in attitude towards  
4 Muslims by region of living. For girls however, we find an interesting difference with the  
5 cities Gothenburg and Malmoe on one side, and all other regions (including Stockholm),  
6 on the other. Girls in Gothenburg have a somewhat less positive attitude towards  
7 Muslims, while girls in Malmoe clearly have a more positive attitude. For the other  
8 regions, no statistical significant difference could be measured relative the reference  
9 category Stockholm.  
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20 However, economic factors at the local level have a certain importance for young  
21 peoples' attitudes towards Muslims. Boys who live in municipalities with a relatively  
22 larger manufacturing sector, a higher level of unemployment and a higher share of  
23 immigrants living in the municipality, have a more negative attitude towards Muslims  
24 than boys who live in municipalities with the opposite conditions. One possible  
25 explanation for this result could be that a relative larger manufacturing sector exposed for  
26 competition is related to larger business cycle variation and fluctuations in  
27 unemployment. One interpretation could be that some boys in these municipalities blame  
28 this situation on immigration in general and Muslims in particular. For girls we do not  
29 find significant results for these variables.  
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43 Finally, our categorization of municipalities into a binary variable wherein either  
44 a municipality has right wing populist political seats in local government or not, show  
45 that young people that live in municipalities where these parties have seats have more  
46 negative attitudes towards Muslims than young people living in municipalities without  
47 such seats. A possible explanation could be that the attitude towards Muslims by young  
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3 people is also affected by other negative attitudes on immigrants and Muslims in the local  
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6 community.

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8 *School factors:* School- and program factors are important explanatory factors for  
9  
10 the attitude towards Muslims by the pupils. An increased individual grade is correlated  
11  
12 with a more positive attitude towards Muslims. Pupils who attend the individual program  
13  
14 (lowest), have a more negative attitude towards Muslims relative the other secondary  
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16 programs. In line with earlier studies we also find a strong correlation between the  
17  
18 occupational distribution of the parents and school performance of pupils.  
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22 *Social psychological factors:* Social psychological factors like restlessness and  
23  
24 aggressiveness also affect the attitude towards Muslims of both girls and boys. This is in  
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26 line with earlier research that has indicated that so called intolerant youth are more  
27  
28 restless. It is most likely that these young people also have negative attitudes towards  
29  
30 Muslims. A hypothetical explanation for the result that was found for 'increasing  
31  
32 nervousness' and increasing positive attitude could be that this is a proxy for emotional  
33  
34 sensitiveness and a more nuanced concept of reality, which in turn could lead to more  
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36 positive attitudes towards those who are perceived as different.  
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41 *Family factors:* In the model also questions were included that measured the  
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43 effect of degree of confidential communication with parents, parent knowledge about the  
44  
45 recreational activities of their child and the reaction of parents on problematic behaviour  
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47 of their children, on the attitude towards Muslims. According to the analysis, pupils with  
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49 parents who reacted strongly on their problematic behaviour have a more positive attitude  
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51 towards Muslims. Surprisingly we found the opposite signs for the other measurements.  
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*Friend factors:* If girls have good relationships they have a more positive attitude towards Muslims relative to if they have less good relationships. This relation was not found for boys. One explanation for this could be that among boys 'good relationships' can be related to having company of 'intolerant groups of friends' (Intolerans 2004) which statistically is less likely for girls.

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*Feelings of exclusion from society:* The question on feelings of exclusion from society is based on the idea that attitudes to immigrants and minorities varies with the degree of trust to other human beings and is asked with the aim to measure to what extent pupils feel in- or excluded from society on a general level. The analysis shows that this variable has a significant effect on the attitude towards Muslims for both boys and girls. The higher the feeling of exclusion, the more the negative attitude is measured.

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*Gender role patterns:* Finally an index measuring gender role patterns among pupils is included in the model. The idea behind this inclusion is that the attitude towards Muslims could be influenced by 'gender role ideals' by both girls and boys. The results show that both boys and girls with more stereotypical, inflexible gender role perceptions have a more negative attitude towards Muslims relative to those who have other perceptions about gender roles.

## 46 **Summary and discussion**

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Earlier Swedish and international statistical studies on attitudes towards Muslims have included relatively few explanatory variables and used only basic statistical tools to measure variation in attitudes towards Muslims. The present study shows, with the use of multiple regression technique, that many variables have a significant, either positive or

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3 negative effect on young people's attitude towards Muslims. Returning to the earlier  
4 studies and the theoretical considerations described initially, various propositions in these  
5 are supported by the results of the study. We have divided this discussion into three levels  
6 well aware of them overlapping each other.  
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12 Starting at the individual level, we find that individual characteristics have  
13 important influence on the attitude towards others, in this case Muslims. Socio-  
14 psychological factors like aggressiveness and restlessness clearly influence held attitudes.  
15 This was an expected result in line with the analysis in the intolerance report (2004),  
16 theories on attitudes of right wing youth but also socio-psychological theories like  
17 Tajfel's (1982). Moreover, our analysis shows that individuals holding stereotypical  
18 understandings of gender and a negative perception of society have more negative  
19 attitudes to Muslims. Interestingly, and in contrast to bivariate analyses, no difference  
20 between girls and boys was measured.  
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34 Robinson et al. (2001) suggested that attitudes were interconnected with  
35 socialization and parental practices, but also with successive maturity. In the present  
36 study, the socio-economic background of parents affected the attitude of youths. If the  
37 result from earlier studies of the adult population is taken into account – parents with less  
38 education and lower socio-economic statuses are more likely to hold negative attitudes  
39 towards Muslims – it is to be expected that these youths' attitudes are in line with their  
40 parents' and that the prejudices are likely to be part of their socialization. The opposite  
41 situation also holds. The children of the ones with a higher socio-economic status and  
42 higher education generally have more positive attitudes. The age hypothesis is more  
43 difficult to confirm. We can not observe a successive increase in positive attitudes; rather,  
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3 no significant difference between the ones between the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (about 14 years old) to  
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5 the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of the gymnasium (17 years) can be measured. But in fact, the oldest  
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7 respondents, the ones in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, have the most positive attitudes.  
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10 An interesting, significant result is that both girls and boys born outside of  
11  
12 Sweden, and especially outside of Europe, have more positive attitudes to Muslims. The  
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14 likeliness of knowing a Muslim increases if you live in immigrant dense areas. It's also  
15  
16 possible that the joint experience of feeling excluded from the category 'Swedish' and  
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18 being labeled immigrant can lead to solidarity and positive, inclusive attitudes. These  
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20 interpretations are in line with the contact hypothesis stressing both general contact and  
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22 common goals and experiences.  
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27 When analysing the results solely on an individual level, attitudes primarily  
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29 depend on the social situation of the individual, his or hers psychic well-being and  
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31 possibly on age. The results of our analysis further indicate a clear support for the contact  
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33 hypothesis which is based on the idea that increased contact with the other induces more  
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35 positive attitudes towards others. Taken all together, negative attitudes would then be  
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37 caused by the life situation of the individual rather than by a specific Islamophobia.  
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39 However, we argue for a need to take other possibilities into account for a more complex  
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41 understanding.  
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46 At the group and societal level, measuring the general friend factors, we find a  
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48 more ambiguous result. For girls, friend factors have a significant positive effect on the  
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50 attitude towards Muslims. For boys we do not find an effect of this factor. This difference  
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52 between the sexes could be due to that boys are more involved in so called intolerant  
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54 groups of friends. Besides, we found that economic, political demographic factors are  
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3 important factors to explain the attitude towards Muslims, especially for boys. Increased  
4 number of immigrants and higher unemployment level correlates with a more negative  
5 attitude towards Muslims by boys and can be seen as threats to the status quo and  
6 increased competition for scarce economic resources in the area where one lives. This  
7 result supports the theoretical propositions of the power-threat hypothesis. We also find  
8 support for the idea that factors at the regional level, in this case right wing political ideas  
9 that have been translated into actual political parties and seats in the local government,  
10 correlate with young individuals attitudes towards Muslims. Also this is in line with the  
11 power-threat-hypothesis but more on a political level.  
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24 While the immediate reaction might be that these analyses are sufficient when  
25 explaining the attitudes, those who propose a structural analysis prefer to make additions  
26 to be able to answer questions like why specifically Muslims are targeted. There is a  
27 claim that negative discourses on Islam and Muslims are especially strong and that there  
28 is a widespread Islamophobia in Sweden reproduced in for example different kinds of  
29 media and popular culture. Why is this not visible in our study – or is it? The previous  
30 study on the same statistical material shows that the attitudes to Jews, homosexuals,  
31 Immigrants and Muslims are similar, albeit marginally harsher against Muslims  
32 (*Intolerans* 2004). In our analysis it is clear that it is the well adjusted children of the well  
33 educated and employed who are the most positive to Muslims. Could it be that they also  
34 hold a competence for expressing positive attitudes in questionnaires, thus concealing  
35 other forms of othering? According to Olivier Roy (2004) one of the principal  
36 misconceptions of Muslims is that Muslims are perceived as a group not a mere  
37 population with diverse interests. Étienne Balibar (2002) further claims that a dominating  
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3 form of new racism is when cultural identity is ascribed to individuals and when group  
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5 categories are closed, not allowing hybridity and transformation. Thus the mere fact that  
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7 the questionnaire groups Muslims together as 'Muslims' helps the middle class to avoid  
8  
9 exposing the foundation of their cultural assumptions, i.e. that Muslims are primarily  
10  
11 different. Positive attitudes towards the other are a norm, but it helps to conceal the fact  
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13 that at the bottom of that norm lays a political act of othering. This line of reasoning can  
14  
15 not be tested with the help of our material but it would be interesting to design  
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17 questionnaires taking these theoretical ideas into account.  
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22 Concluding, our analysis shed some light on what factors seem to be relevant  
23  
24 explaining the attitude towards Muslims by young people. Since these results are highly  
25  
26 contextual and difficult to generalise we are careful in stating that the measured effects  
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28 will last in different environments. Our recommendation is therefore increased future  
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30 research, both comparative and longitudinal, that could confirm or refute our results.  
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**Table 1: Adolescent attitudes towards Muslims. Multivariate regression.**

	All	Girls	Boys
Boys	0.034	-	-
Grade 9	-0.007	0.058	-0.067
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Secondary	-0.052	-0.086*	-0.020
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Secondary	0.026	0.013	0.059
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Secondary	0.084**	0.102**	0.107**
North/West/Eastern Europe	0.100***	0.052	0.135***
Southern Europe	0.159**	0.147	0.173*
Outside Europe	0.178***	0.167***	0.206***
Skilled worker	0.009	-0.004	0.031
Lower civil servant	0.040	0.044	0.034
Intermediate civil servant	0.133***	0.123***	0.136***
Higher civil servant	0.162***	0.143***	0.173***
Occupations with academic education	0.143***	0.191***	0.098
Entrepreneur	0.040	0.028	0.064
Agricultural worker	0.093	0.133	0.071
Single parent family	-0.016	0.012	-0.056*
Mother unemployed	0.032	-0.006	0.053
Father unemployed	-0.029	-0.098	0.058
Gothenburg	-0.052	-0.181**	0.172
Malmoe	0.245**	0.384**	0.091
Other larger cities	0.054	0.067	0.057
Medium sized cities	-0.016	0.024	0.031
Large municipalities	0.049	0.084	0.049
Smaller municipalities	-0.038	-0.083	0.036
Country site	0.073	0.103	0.080
Share unemployed	-0.012*	-0.007	-0.019**
Share immigrants	-0.005***	-0.003*	-0.007***
Size manufacturing sector	-0.004***	-0.001	-0.007***
Right wing populist mandate	-0.178***	-0.136***	-0.204***
Mean grade level	0.142***	0.191***	0.090***
Well being at school	0.084***	0.065***	0.102***

University- and occup. Preparing program	-0.033	0.104	-0.103*
Occupational preparing program	-0.186***	-0.016	-0.346***
Individual program	-0.332***	-0.338***	-0.385***
Restlessness(index)	-0.040***	-0.049***	-0.031*
Aggressiveness(index)	-0.062***	-0.042***	-0.080***
Risk preference(index)	0.013	0.010	0.016
Nervousness(index)	0.057***	0.046***	0.068***
Parent communication(index)	-0.048***	-0.042***	-0.051***
Parent knowledge recreational activities(index)	-0.016	-0.025*	-0.008
Parent reaction problematic behaviour(index)	0.054***	0.046***	0.057***
Friend relations(index)	0.009	0.024*	-0.001
Know Muslim	0.095***	0.129***	0.073***
Does not know Muslim	-0.165***	-0.123***	-0.203***
<i>Feelings of exclusion from society (index)</i>	-0.128***	-0.128***	-0.128***
<i>Gender roll patterns (index)</i>	-0.316***	-0.321***	-0.308***
<i>Constant</i>	2.874***	2.674***	3.072***
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	0.369	0.352	0.352
<i>Number</i>	9498	4680	4818

\*\*\*significant<0,001, \*\*significant<0,005, \*significant<0,01

*Reference categories for dummy variables in regression are girls, grade 8, Swedish born, unskilled worker and Stockholm.*

**Appendix I: Adolescent attitudes towards young Muslims, Mean of index, Standard Deviation, and the percentage by answering category**

<b>Girls</b>								
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	
Most Muslims are decent people...	3,00	0.980	36,8	35,4	21,2	4,1	2,4	
It would be entirely okay to have a steady Muslim as a neighbour...	3,57	0.841	72,8	17,0	6,6	1,7	1,9	
Muslims in Sweden should have the right to build Mosques ...	2,56	1.352	33,6	21,2	25,2	7,4	12,7	
There are far too many Muslims in Sweden...	2,54	1.286	32,9	16,5	31,5	10,0	9,1	
You can not trust a Muslim...	3,02	1.090	46,9	18,4	27,0	4,6	2,9	
It should be forbidden for Muslims to vote in elections...	3,37	1.031	66,9	11,5	16,3	2,3	3,1	
Most immigrated Muslims are very likely law-abiding...	2,67	1.074	29,2	34,2	25,3	7,1	4,2	
Most Muslims only want to live on social security...	2,41	1.158	23,2	20,6	36,4	13,9	6,0	
<b>Boys</b>								
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	
Most Muslims are decent people...	2,68	1.110	25,8	35,3	25,4	7,9	5,7	
It would be entirely okay to have a steady Muslim as a neighbour...	3,28	1.087	58,9	22,5	10,9	2,7	5,0	
Muslims in Sweden should have the right to build Mosques ...	2,24	1.469	27,9	18,5	24,2	8,7	20,7	
There are far too many Muslims in Sweden...	2,12	1.354	22,4	14,9	31,1	15,4	16,2	
You can not trust a Muslim...	2,69	1.206	35,0	20,0	30,3	8,5	6,2	
It should be forbidden for Muslims to vote in elections...	3,08	1.257	57,3	12,5	18,8	4,0	7,4	
Most immigrated Muslims are very likely law-abiding...	2,38	1.260	22,3	28,1	26,0	12,7	10,8	
Most Muslims only want to live on social security...	2,03	1.294	17,7	16,8	31,5	18,7	15,3	

The answering alternatives on these statements were: yes, this is correct; this is relatively correct; unsure/doesn't know; this is rather incorrect; no, this is incorrect. For some statements we change the order

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of answering. For all statements hold, a higher mean, close to 4, implicate a more positive attitude towards Muslims.

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## Appendix II: Independent variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>
<b>Demography</b>		<b>School/program factors</b>	
<i>Gender</i>	Girls, Boys	<i>Mean grade level</i>	Index
<i>Grade</i>	Grade 8 (15 years old)	<i>Well being at school</i>	Index
	Grade 9 (16 years old)	<i>Program</i>	University preparing
	Secondary 1 <sup>st</sup> Grade		University and
			professional preparing
	Secondary 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade		Professional preparing
	Secondary 3 <sup>th</sup> Grade		Individual
<i>Region of birth</i>	Sweden	<b>Social psychological factors</b>	
	North/West/Eastern	<i>Restlessness</i>	Index
	Europe		
	Southern Europe	<i>Aggressiveness</i>	Index
	Outside Europe	<i>Risk preference</i>	Index
<b>Socioeconomic background</b>		<i>Nervousness</i>	Index
<i>Parents socioeconomic background</i>	Non skilled worker	<b>Family factors</b>	
	Skilled worker	<i>Parent communication</i>	Index
	Lower civil servant	<i>Parent knowledge recreational activities</i>	Index
	Intermediate civil servant	<i>Parent reaction problematic behaviour</i>	Index
	Higher civil servant	<b>Friend factors</b>	
	Fri occupations with academic education	<i>Friend relations</i>	Index
	Entrepreneur	<i>Knows Muslim</i>	No, Yes
	Agricultural worker	<b>Exclusion</b>	
<i>Single parent family</i>	No, Yes	<i>Feelings of exclusion from society</i>	Index
<i>Mother unemployed</i>	No, Yes	<b>Gender role factors</b>	
<i>Father unemployed</i>	No, Yes	<i>Gender roll patterns</i>	Index
<b>Local/Regional factors</b>			
<i>Municipality type</i>	Stockholm		
	Gothenburg		

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	Malmoe
	Other larger cities
	Medium sized cities
	Large municipalities
	Smaller municipalities
	Country site
<i>Unemployment level (municipality)</i>	continuous
<i>Share foreign born (municipality)</i>	continuous
<i>Size manufacturing sector (municipality)</i>	continuous
<i>Right wing populist mandate in municipality</i>	No, Yes

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The number of 400.000 Muslims in 2007 is an assumption based on earlier figures given by Anwar, Blaschke & Sander 2004:224 updated with netmigration to Sweden from Muslim countries up to 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The Swedish school system has 9 obligatory grades followed by a 3 year upper secondary school where students can choose between different programs.

<sup>3</sup> The reduction of responses is higher with increased age and a possible explanation for this is that in higher grades students have less classroom lectures and more apprenticeship hours. Since increased age induced higher positive attitudes towards Muslims we probably slightly underestimate the positive attitude towards Muslims by the population. See also *Intolerans* (2004) for more on the initial questionnaire, method of selection, reduction of responses, etc.

<sup>4</sup> The internal correlation is 0.90 measured as the Cronbach alfa coefficient which is on a satisfactory level. Since some of the statements were stated in the opposite direction, we reversed the coding for all statements in the same direction.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix II for overview. For construction of all indexes and the questions asked, these are available from the author upon request.

<sup>6</sup> Available from author upon request.

<sup>7</sup> The population and labour market indicators are based on data from Statistics Sweden. The political indicator is based on statistics of the local elections of 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Test for multicollinearity of both the variables *feelings of social exclusion from society* and *gender role patterns* gave a correlation of 0.23 and 0.44 respectively.

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