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Essay

Young Muslims' estrangement from Swedish majority society: Influences from the minority

Ever since the 9/11 attack in the United States, researchers in various fields have highlighted influences which encourage engagement in militant activities, as well as engagement in criminal activities, among young Muslims in minority communities in Europe and the US (Jacuch et.al. 2009; Doosje et. al. 2013; Campelo et. al. 2018). Many of the researchers referred to below use the concept 'radicalisation' when dealing with what I term 'Salafism', whether non-violent or militant. Some of the studies below which discuss 'radicalisation' deal mainly with militant Salafism. Although I will maintain the concept of 'radicalisation' when discussing their studies, it is pertinent to give a definition of the concept 'Salafism' as used in this study, as I will use the terms 'Salafism'/'Salafi'/'Salafist' when discussing what these researchers call 'radicalisation'. 'Salafism' is a trend within Islam that builds its understanding of Islam on the Quran and on texts regarded as coming from the first three generations (plural: *aslaf*, singular *salaf)* of Muslims based on the Prophet's example, known as the Sunna. Although there are various Islamic Salafi trends, the new Salafists tend to strictly follow the prophet Muhammad's Sunna in day-to-day life. This pertains to, for instance, clothing, behaviour, etc. (non-violent), as well as political matters (often violent), relating particularly to how the Prophet Muhammad ruled the Islamic empire in the 7th century and how he dealt with non-Muslims. It is important to be aware that the Islamic State (IS) has followers who are often

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called Salafists, but who do not have profound knowledge of these Islamic sources. Rather, many may adhere to this organisation due to (for instance) its particularly violent approach or strict structure, which might be attractive to many young Muslims in Muslim minorities. However, the Salafi creed is used as the foundation for IS, as well as for other, similar organisations.

The Norwegian researcher Holmer (2016) discussed reasons for radicalisation – e.g. reasons for militant Salafism – among young Muslims in Norway. She found that, similarly to Muslim minorities in other European countries, reasons for radicalisation were a feeling of injustice, the perception of being treated according to a societal double standard and thus having fewer opportunities than the rest of the population, and the perception of not being accepted in society despite being integrated into the labour market. Last but not least, the radicalised young Muslims in her study regarded Norwegian foreign policy as part of a global military and ideological campaign against Muslims. 'Individuals', she claimed, 'may turn to militant Salafist ideology because it articulates their individual frustrations and grievances, and provides an alternative worldview that offers justice, meaning and community based on a shared religion and ideology' (Holmer 2016: 4).

Hemmingsen (2011) discussed methodological questions in her study of Salafists in Denmark, whereas Jacobsen (2019) analysed Danish Salafi women's online writing in order to explore their reasons for being attracted to Salafi movements. Jacobsen's study is interesting and pertinent, however, it focuses on solely religious motives rather than the subject matter of this study: sociological reasons for adherence to Salafi ideology.

In the Swedish context, Ranstorp et al. have investigated Salafism within both non-violent and militant Salafi movements (2019). The studies of the Swedish case by Olsson (2018) and Olsson and Poljarevic (2014) provide relevant theological information about Salafi activities in Sweden, but little is mentioned about reasons for adhering to such movements. Nilsson (2017), on the other hand, conducted interviews with jihadists in Sweden in his study on reasons why young Muslims turn to militant activities, particularly their reasons for travelling to Syria to fight for the Islamic State (IS), mainly in the middle of the 2010s. He sees 'radicalisation' – in this case, militant Salafism – as a process which starts with upbringing, is filled out by experi-

enced recruiters, and is then a processual development as part of practical jihad activities. Nilsson examined IS's propaganda and linked this to Islamic terms which the youths might have grown up around, but not have a profound understanding of, such as *jihad* (making effort), *kufar* (unbelievers), etc. Although not explicitly expressed, Nilsson's study indicated that the young Muslims in his study had little Islamic education. Instead, as he states, they received superficial Islamic knowledge in their childhoods and adolescences. Thus, as more experienced jihadists convey a violent understanding of well-known concepts, the youths easily accept their message as 'true Islam'. This study will build on Nilsson's findings, although not explicitly stated, about how upbringing and ideas conveyed within the group might play a role in a process towards a violent understanding of Islam.

Although the studies discussed above are studies on Salafism in Scandinavia, I will also look more closely at studies performed in a European context. As Holmer stated, most research on reasons for youths' adherence to Salafi ideology indicates strong similarities between various European countries (2011: 4). Thus, this survey of research in the social sciences' field of study of Salafism will examine European research due to its relevance to the Scandinavian Salafi context.

Psychologists and psychiatrists tend to assess 'radicalisation' in terms of psychological vulnerability, such as depression, but also as a result of familial dysfunction. Rolling and Corduan, for instance, have suggested that 'radicalisation' may be a new symptom of adolescence (2017), thus linking 'radicalisation' to adolescent depression. Similarly, Benslama suggests that 'radicalisation' may be a way of coping with adolescent crisis (2016), and Campelo et al. regard adolescence *per se* as creating a risk of 'radicalisation' (2018). Benslama also links 'radicalisation' to an adolescent death wish; what in psychiatric literature is regarded as 'suicidal intentionality', which Masmoudi and Hantouche relate to depression (2008).

Social scientists in other fields tend to assess risks of 'radicalisation' in terms of polarisation and discrimination against minority groups. Where Khosrokhavar emphasises socially disorganised families, feelings of social injustice, and identity issues (2015), Moyano and Trijillo look mainly at identity (2014). The two latter researchers' main contribution is their investiga-

tion into the differences between sense of belonging and identity among young Christians and young Muslims living in the same marginalised area. Interestingly, the difference in pronounced identity between the two groups was huge when it came to both national and religious identity. Whereas the young Muslims tended to express a Muslim identity, the young Christians expressed a Spanish identity (Moyano and Trijillo 2014: 102-3). This can of course be explained in ethnic terms, as most of the Christian respondents probably (not explicitly expressed, 2014: 95) had an 'ethnically' Spanish background, whereas the Muslim respondents seem to have had ethnic backgrounds from mainly Morocco and North Africa (2014: 95) – although many of them might also have been born in Spain (2014: 102). This study shows two variables emerging: ethnic (including religious) background, and inter-group relations involving perceived discrimination against the Muslim community. The two researchers' conclusion was that social marginalisation is less important in the 'radicalisation' process than perceived injustice in majority-minority relations and a sense of threat to the group (Moyano and Trijillo 2014: 103-4). Thus, the emphasis on community (national and Muslim) seems to play a vital role in how the youths identified themselves. According to the two researchers, the community aspect is also significant in the 'radicalisation' process of young Muslims (Moyano and Trijillo 2014: 103-4). However, I would add to this discussion that contemporary Muslims have a more established model for extremism than Christians and individuals belonging to other religions. Therefore, the canalisation into violent activism, as well as non-violent manifestations, seems obvious in the Muslim group to individuals who choose an activist approach due to marginalisation and perceived discrimination.

The three researchers Doosje, Loseman and van den Bos discussed 'radicalisation' in terms of three factors: 'personal uncertainty', 'perceived injustice' and 'perceived group threat' (2013). In the following discussion I will examine these three factors, all of which are linked to the concept of identity within inter-group relations. Moreover, in contrast to these three researchers, who tend to regard 'radicalisation' in terms of violent group opposition, this study takes a more general view of Salafism as both violent and non-violent, with *the most important aspect being segregated groups' opposition towards the majority.*

Some methodological remarks

I have conducted research in Muslim communities in Scandinavia, mainly in the south of Sweden, and in some European countries since the late 1980s. As the young Muslims who took part in Salafi activities in the 2010s were born between from the end of the 1980s through the 1990s and the beginning of the first decade of 2000, my fieldwork from this time is highly relevant. As a Norwegian Muslim convert since 1982, I have lived and participated in Muslim communities in Norway and the south of Sweden. From the 1990s onwards I conducted interviews with many Muslims, including international and local Muslim leaders in the Middle East and in Europe. The most important source for the research in this study is, however, my participation in the Muslim communities, particularly between 1982 and 2009 but, to a certain extent, even later. As a member of the Muslim community, I had access to informal discussions and statements which did not emerge in the public sphere. In hindsight, I can see that some statements which could be interpreted as encouragement of segregation from the majority society were seldom expressed outside the circle of Muslims, but were common in the internal Muslim debate. At the time of my early interviews I was not looking for segregating statements, and therefore did not ask questions which could identify such trends. As a researcher with a double identity, e.g. being both part of the Muslim community and part of the majority society, I was looking for statements which were positive towards integration in order to show that Muslims wanted integration, not segregation. It may even be the case that if I had asked formal questions about segregation, I would have received answers encouraging integration rather than segregation. However, as I did not explicitly ask such questions, I cannot know but can only assume that this would have been the case due to my experience of differences between formal interviews and informal discussions.

I did, however, begin to look at problems with integration after 2009, when I became more aware of Muslims communities' self-segregation from the majority society. Thus, in later research I emphasised questions dealing with segregation, although I developed some of the understandings present in this study during the decade of 2010.

The main sources used in this study are therefore informal

discussions and observations, and to some extent, interviews, from the period between 1982 and 2009 (Roald 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2011, and Ouis and Roald 2003). As I still have contact with Muslim communities, I have discussed elements of segregating behaviour in Muslim communities with some Muslims. Many young Muslims who grew up in Sweden in the 1980s, 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s have given me positive feedback in informal discussions from early 2000 onwards, contributing to my understanding of how they experienced their parents' educational strategies.

The second source material used in this study is published books and newspaper articles written either by or about individuals whose parents emigrated to Sweden and Norway from countries in which Islam is the majority religion. These individuals were either born in Scandinavia or arrived as toddlers. The experiences of these individuals have confirmed my understanding of parental strategies.

The focus of this study

This study will examine the minority perspective on young Muslims' attraction to Salafism. As observed by Basra and Neumann (2017), there are obvious similarities between young Muslims' attraction to Salafism and to criminality. However, this study will only deal with the Salafist aspect.

The starting point of this study is to look at the tendency of many Muslim immigrant communities to stay apart from majority society, a tendency which I observed during my years as part of the Muslim community. There are many factors which might have played a role in the segregation of Muslim individuals and Muslim communities in Swedish society. Although this segregation does not pertain to the Muslim community as a whole, I have observed that it does pertain to many Muslim individuals and communities. As referred to above, researchers consider various factors decisive for young immigrants turning away from the majority society. As a result of my observations and analysis built on these observations, I have found three decisive factors which will be discussed below: Swedish multicultural policy (Mångfald), Muslim Brotherhood/Wahhabi ideas penetrating Swedish society through international Islamic in-

formation, and Muslim parental educational strategies of portraying and thus transmitting 'Swedish identity' in negative terms.

The concept of 'identity'

Theoretically, this study relies on the concept of 'identity'. Many fields of social science highlight how the creation of identity plays a vital role during the formative years of childhood and adolescence. Researchers usually distinguish between individual, interpersonal and collective identity (Brewer and Gardner 2007). Researchers of social identity often regard group identity as being important, as individuals, particularly in minority groups, tend to 'attribute value to the group to which they belong and to derive self-esteem from their sense of belonging to that group' (Roberts et al. 1999). Moreover, group belonging is regarded as providing 'individuals with a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive self-concept' (Phinney 1990: 501). This positive self-concept in individuals might, however, be associated with a tendency to distinguish oneself from out-groups, which, in a majority-minority relationship, indicates a tendency for minorities to stay separate from the majority society, either out of praised self-categorisation/identity or out of loyalty (see Phinney 1990: 501).

As observed by Moyano and Trijillo, identity formation in the Muslim group was, to a great extent and in contrast to the Christian group, anchored in religion (2014: 103). This could be explained (among other possible explanations) in terms of majority-minority relations concerning, for instance, ethnicity, but the highlighting of religion in Muslim communities could be a result of religion being the main marker which distinguishes Muslims from the majority society, as well from as other minorities.

The social psychologist Michael A. Hogg developed the uncertainty-identity theory within the frame of social identity theory (see e.g. Hogg et al 2010 and Hogg and Adelman 2013). Hogg argued that individuals aspire to a reduction of feelings of uncertainty about themselves, their attitudes and their behaviours. Group identification as a way of reducing uncertainty gives the

individual a formula for their behaviour and interactions with others, both within and outside the group. Hogg and Adelman believe that 'distinctive and well-structured groups' with clear boundaries and 'consensual and prescriptive attitudinal and behavioural attributes grounded in a relatively homogenous world view' are 'better suited than others to self-uncertainty reduction through self-categorisation' (2013: 437). The two researchers relate this statement to extremist groups believing that such groups fit particularly well into the pattern of uncertainty reduction versus group identification (Hogg and Adelman 2013: 437). 'Uncertainty motivates behaviour aimed at reducing uncertainty' (Hogg and Adelman 2013: 438), they claim, and Hogg further states that 'feeling uncertain about one's perceptions, attitudes, values, and ultimately oneself is uncomfortable and powerful[ly] motivating' (Hogg et al. 2010: 13). Individuals strive to reduce uncertainty in order to 'render the world more predictable', and Hogg and Adelman support their arguments by referring to philosopher John Dewey's statement that: 'In the absence of actual certainty in the midst of a precarious and hazardous world, men [sic!] cultivate all sorts of things that would give them the feeling of certainty' (in Hogg et al. 2010: 13).

Swedish Diversity Policy ('Mångfald')

I have observed that the policy in Swedish society of emphasising multicultural aspects (*Mångfald*, or diversity) is an important factor in the development of Muslim identity. This particular policy is based on a law from 1974 which promotes a vague idea of 'multiculturalism' as an ideal, introducing concepts such as 'equality', 'freedom of choice' and 'partnership'. This law seems to have been a response to the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the ICCPR) from 1966, which was ratified by Sweden in 1971 – specifically a response to Article 27 of the ICCPR. 'Multiculturalism' was not explicitly set out in legislation, but the law was an implicit quest for a policy of freedom of choice for 'members of linguistic minorities domiciled in Sweden' between 'retaining and developing their original cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity'. The law

1. SOU 1974.
2. Article 27 says: 'In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.'
3. SOU 1974.

Ikhwani/Wahhabi ideology

The second decisive factor in young Muslims rejecting the majority society's frames of references is the popularity of the Islamist political ideology which has resulted in the notion of Islam as a 'comprehensive system' (*al-nizam al-shamil*). This ideology has pervaded Muslim-majority communities, particularly in countries with Muslim majorities and in Muslim minorities in receiving countries, due to the efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwan al-muslimun*, often shortened to *ikhwan*) and the Saudi Wahhabists. This factor should be considered in view of activist strategies of *da'wa* (call to Islam) in these two Islamic trends. The dissemination of IIFSO's (International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations) books, as well as *da'wa* activity carried out by scholars who travelled internationally and by Muslim immigrants close to the Muslim Brotherhood, who gave lectures, had an important impact on the development of Islamic ideas in Swedish society (see for instance Hedin 1988; Otterbeck 2000; Carlbom 2003). The IIFSO books promoted the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas (*fikr al-ikhwani*) and, enabled by petrol money from the Persian Gulf, books could be printed and disseminated for free all over the world. As it was mainly Saudi Arabians and Kuwaitis who funded the publications, even books containing Wahhabi ideas were published by IIFSO along with Muslim Brotherhood books. Through the activities of IIFSO, the alliance between these two important Islamist trends was established.

One main idea in the Ikhwani-Wahhabi legacy is the idea of the Quran and Sunna, the Prophetic traditions (e.g. Hadiths), as the main Islamic sources (the 'pure sources'), a prominent Salafi idea which is promoted by both the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism. Instead of looking into Islamic jurisprudential literature, Muslims should search directly in the 'pure' sources, the Quran and the Sunna, for Islamic knowledge. It is interesting to note that this emphasis on the 'pure' sources was, to a great extent, the starting point for re-interpreting the Islamic sources in a new time and in new settings. We can thus see a development in which the Muslim Brotherhood, similarly to the Salafists, believe in the Salafi notion regarding '*aqida*' (creed, eg. belief in the nature of God), whereas they distinguish themselves from the Salafists by not being Salafi in *fiqh* (jurispru-

dence), the latter being the most important trait of all Salafist movements and organisations. The Salafists tend to interpret the Prophet's example literally; for instance by dressing and eating as the Prophet did (e.g. by hand, sitting on the floor, etc.). The Salafist movement seems to have developed from the alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism. However, the two trends – the Ikhwani (members of, former members of and sympathisers with the Muslim Brotherhood) and the Salafists – separated from the late 1990s onwards in Sweden, although in the Arab Peninsula the link between the two seems to have lingered for longer (Farhuqar 2016).

In IIFSO literature, informal discussion, and lectures I attended, the Quran and the Sunna were always emphasised as the main Islamic sources. It is interesting to see this success of a simplification of the Islamic sources in view of 'Islam' transiting into new domains. In Muslim minorities, few Muslims, even those who are born Muslim, have profound religious knowledge. It seems to have been easier to handle religious issues by using only the Quran and the Prophet's traditions (*ahadith*), both translated into European languages, than to take the enormous amount of legal literature into consideration. Another aspect is the general trend towards individualisation – in the aftermath of the spread of education, but also due to the development of IT and the internet. The search for knowledge became easy, as the sources were available on the Internet, and the Islamic sources were thus highlighted instead of Islamic legal literature.

The notion of the Quran and the Sunna as the main sources fits well with Nilsson's understanding of how IS propaganda develops Islamic terms of which youths have only superficial knowledge (2017). With a lack of knowledge of the historical background and development of the legal literature, the youth might easily be seduced by simplistic understandings of 'Islam'.

Discussion

Muslim versus Swedish identity

In February 2001, Umar, a Muslim, Arab-speaking man in his forties who had lived in Sweden since 1988, stated:

> Sweden is the best country Muslims can live in. The rules of society are very similar to Islamic rules. However, the problem is the next generation. Swedish society's quest for children's individual freedom jeopardises Muslim parents' attempt to bring children up to be good Muslims.

There is clearly a discrepancy in Umar's statement. Swedish rules are similar to Islamic rules, but the aspect of individual freedom is not. Individual freedom and individual rights are deeply rooted in Swedish legislation and when I asked him to elaborate on what he meant, he highlighted the Swedish welfare system as being similar to Islamic social thought.

Umar's statement was reinforced in informal discussions and interviews with Muslims in Sweden. Scandinavian society was considered a very good society for first-generation Muslim immigrants to live in except for the intergenerational aspect, mentioned by Umar, but also except for majority-minority relations on the individual level. As for intergenerational relations between first-generation immigrant Muslims and their children, the new generation was expected to adapt to and live according to minority 'culture' and to religious rules. This quest for children's adaptation to parents' cultural traits can be regarded in view of what Doosje et al. describe in terms of 'personal uncertainty' and 'perceived group threat' (2013).

As for majority-minority relations, Muslims, both first-generation immigrants and their children, expressed that 'Swedes' were hostile towards Muslims in everyday interactions and that particularly the media tended to attack Muslims. This perception can be regarded in view of Doosje et al.'s concept of 'perceived injustice' (2013).

Muslim identity

The concept of 'personal uncertainty' (Doosje et al. 2013) can be linked both to first-generation immigrant Muslims and their children, although the reasons for this uncertainty differ. As expressed during discussions, first-generation Muslims had a fear that their children would become 'too Swedish' and thereby be lost to Swedish 'culture'. This idea must be considered from various angles. Firstly, intergroup relations in Sweden have created ideas about 'the other' among both the majority society and mi-

nority communities. This study is, however, oriented towards the minority, and I observed pervasive ideas about the majority society flourish in the Muslim community. These ideas result partly from little contact between the majority and minorities, and perhaps also from an intentional painting-black of 'the West' by many Muslim leaders, as will be discussed below. Muslims leaders even encourage Muslims to stay apart from the majority society in receiving countries. The quote from the famous Islamic leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi illustrates this:

> I used to tell our brothers in foreign countries, try to have your small society within the larger society, otherwise you melt in like salt in water. What has preserved the Jewish character over the past centuries has been their small community that was unique in its ideas and rituals and was known as 'the Jewish ghetto'. Try to have your own 'Muslim ghetto' then (Larise 2012: 266 footnote 35; see also al-Qaradawi 2000: 90).

In my informal discussions and observations, I discovered strong prejudices towards majority society and particularly towards 'the West'. I will refer to a lecture for Muslim women which I attended in the Arab Emirates in early 2001 . This lecture was not atypical, as many Muslim leaders in Sweden and many of the visiting scholars at Islamic conferences in Sweden promoted similar messages. The lecturer was an Islamic scholar within the Ikhwani/Wahhabi trend. In the lecture, he elaborated on how superior Islamic life was to the 'Western lifestyle'. He stated that in 'the West', parents throw their children out of the home when they turn 18 (1); that old people are put away in homes for the elderly where they are mistreated and their children do not care to visit them (2); that 'Western' families have no social interaction (3); and that in 'the West', sexual intercourse, both heterosexual and homosexual, occurs frequently without any social consequences (4). He then contrasted all the negative aspects of 'Western life' with the Islamic lifestyle, where families have tight interaction in all aspects of life and sexual morals are high.

To illustrate how this message is reproduced by Muslims in Sweden, I want to draw attention to an informal discussion I had with a young woman in May 2019. She wears a headscarf and works in an ethnically mixed workplace. She expressed that she

7. Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a promoter of the Ikhwani trend. His weekly television shows on al-Jazira in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s had a huge influence on Muslims living in Sweden at the time (Roald 2001).

had always heard that ethnic 'Swedes' did not care about their children once they reached the age of adolescence. She said that, despite this, one of her Swedish colleagues had intensive contact with her grown-up children and grandchildren, and was assisting them financially. The young Muslim woman reflected on having been prejudiced and having stereotyped ethnic 'Swedes'. When reflecting on why, she stated that she had heard many negative things about ethnic 'Swedes', but that as she had started her new job she had changed her mind.

The conclusion to draw is thus that (some or many) members of Muslim minorities tend to see the majority in terms of negative stereotypes and their own group in a more superior manner, which is a common trend in group dynamics with an 'us-and-them' and 'othering' attitudes. By idealising the 'us', 'personal uncertainty' can be minimised (see Hogg and Adelman 2013).

To achieve further understanding of why such stereotypes are reproduced in Muslim communities, the fact that (some or many) first-generation Muslim immigrants in Sweden did not learn Swedish properly and do not properly understand how Swedish society works plays a vital role. These matters can lead to 'personal uncertainty' in day-to-day life. This uncertainty, in combination with stereotypes and prejudices about Swedish society, might be one of the main reasons for first-generation Muslim immigrants not wanting their children to become 'too Swedish'.

Looking at Norwegian journalist Zaman's book from 1999, one finds a parallel with my experience of Muslim communities in Sweden. Zaman's parents are from the first-generation Pakistani immigrant community. His book describes how first-generation Pakistani immigrant parents were concerned with their children not becoming 'too Norwegian'. This applied to their daughters in terms of the way they dressed, and to both their daughters and sons in terms of their relations with the other gender. One female interviewee from the Norwegian Pakistani first-generation community expressed to me at the beginning of 2000 that she would not accept her sons or her daughters marrying into the Norwegian ethnic community (Roald 2005). She explained that this was because she wanted her sons to provide the family with an Urdu-speaking daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law had to take care of her and her husband when

they grew older, and she would never accept a woman who could not speak Urdu and who did not know her obligations to her in-laws, she explained. As for her daughter, she referred to the Islamic rule that Muslim women cannot marry a non-Muslim. However, she would not accept an ethnic Norwegian convert either, she claimed, as Norwegians – Muslim or not – would not understand their lifestyle. This example indicates insecurity in a new society and, more subtly, a threat to family cohesion. This example can be considered in view of what Hogg and Adelman call 'reduction of self-uncertainty through self-categorisation' (2013:437), through which individuals want to 'render the world more predictable' (in Hogg et al. 2010: 13). By keeping children within the fold, the world becomes more predictable and secure.

A further explicit illustration of immigrant parents' fear of their children becoming 'too Swedish' (*försvenskad*) is an article by a Swedish journalist, Rakel Shukri. She belongs to the Assyrian (Christian) community in Sweden and her cultural roots are thus Middle Eastern (*Sydsvenskan*, 3 March 2019). She writes about her own experiences, and by linking them to the experiences of a woman with a Kurdish cultural background, she sees the similarities, which have less to do with religion and more to do with 'culture'. She opens the article by writing:

> 'You have become too Swedish (*försvenskad*).' I cannot recall exactly when these words were expressed for the first time, but I remember the emotions (*Sydsvenskan*, 3 March 2019).

Her reaction was a perception of being a foreigner in her own group, that she was different from the 'real' Assyrians and that she had chosen 'the wrong side'. It is interesting that Chukri points out many of the Muslim prejudices against 'the Swedes' in her own group. She discusses how the parent generation in the Assyrian community saw 'the Swedes' in terms of not being religious, and, as a consequence of this lack of religion, promiscuity and the collapse of the family followed. She also refers to the idea that 'Swedes' hide away their elders in caring homes, as well as 'Swedes' easily divorcing, falling in love with somebody new and then forgetting their children from their previous marriage. She also states that 'many ['Swedes'] live together without being married, which implied an express ticked to hell' (*Syds-*

venskan, 3 March 2019). Even the Christian Assyrian community regarded sexual relations outside marriage as problematic. Although young males had more freedom, the 'Assyrian culture' was still essential to every youth in the community. Chukri explains this in terms of the Assyrian community finding it important to protect a 'culture' which has been threatened for centuries. She further states that, in Sweden, the concept of becoming 'too Swedish' expresses this cultural threat. Chukri uses her mother's words:

> We moved to Sweden in order to survive as Assyrians, not to die as Swedes. We did not give up everything to see our children turn their backs on their culture' (*Sydsvenskan*, 3 March 2019).

Doosje et al.'s concept of 'perceived group threat' is obvious in this statement, in the fear of children disappearing into the majority culture (2013).

In Chukri's discussion with the journalist Trifa Abdullah from the Kurdish-Muslim community, we witness how the two women, who come from different religious communities but similar cultural backgrounds, have comparable experiences. Trifa sees the accusation of becoming 'too Swedish' as 'very insulting, as it creates distance towards your child. You are not like us anymore, you are this way which we hate. Can you understand what a betrayal this is?' she says (*Sydsvenskan,* 3 March 2019). Even Chukri sees the concept of becoming 'too Swedish' in terms of how she betrayed her own community, as for her, accepting 'Swedishness' was natural as she grew up in Sweden.

The two women discussed how they both received contradictory signals from their families. On the one hand, the families wanted their children to learn the Swedish language well in order to get good jobs in Sweden, whereas on the other hand, they were not supposed to let the environment influence into being 'less Assyrian or Kurdish' and becoming 'Swedish' (*Sydsvenskan,* 3 March 2019). Trifa, who exited family relations, expresses that although people around her feel that she has succeeded because of her liberation from her family, they do not understand that many people in her situation feel broken inside.

Both women are struggling with their identity constructions. Chukri feels like a 'svassyrier', something in between the two ethnic identities, whereas for Trifa, her [pure] Kurdish iden-

tity is important. Both see the concept of becoming 'too Swed-ish' as creating an impossible choice for new generations in im-migrant communities. Children are forced to choose a side, whereas what really happens is that all 'cultures' change over time, Chukri writes (*Sydsvenskan,* 3 March 2019).

Many of the first-generation Muslim immigrants I spoke to and interviewed expressed all four stereotypes mentioned by the Islamic scholar above, as well as those mentioned by Chukri. The most worrying issues were, however, the sexual 'immoral-ity' and the lack of social interaction within the family. To illus-trate the reaction to these two stereotypes I refer to one of my interviewees, Hanifa, a woman in her forties at the time of the interview (see Roald 2009) with three adolescent children. Han-ifa was well-educated in her home country is and well-integrat-ed into Swedish society in terms of labour market integration, an important aspect of the Swedish authorities' understanding of the concept of 'integration' (Roald 2009). She speaks the Swedish language, she works at an official workplace with both men and women, and her job is well-suited to her educational background. She stated that she always took care to tell her chil-dren that they were Muslims and not 'Swedish' because she was afraid of them 'behaving in the immoral Swedish way' when it came to sexual relationships outside marriage. This statement clearly relates to honour-based issues. It is important to note that honour-based violence of various forms has become part of the Swedish context due to – among other things – immigra-tion from countries in which honour-based violence is com-mon, probably (mainly) resulting from both Muslims' fear of Swedish liberal attitudes towards sexual relations, and from Muslim communities' segregation in Swedish society (see Wikan 2004; Schlytter and Linell 2010; Moghaddam 2013).

In the Swedish public debate, honour killings, even at time of the death of Fadime Sahindal (see Wikan 2004), tended to be discussed in terms of 'culture' rather than religion, where-as in Norway the religious aspect of honour killings has been prominent in the debate (Roald 2004: 211). This attempt to avoid religious controversy indicates the multicultural (Mångfald) emphasis in Sweden and a tendency to tone down particularly religious aspects, probably in order to establish good relations with a growing Muslim minority. In contrast, in both Denmark and Norway, which have less pronounced multicultural policies,

religious arguments about controversial issues are more prominent. That the Muslim minorities in both Norway and Denmark are smaller than that in Sweden might play a role here, as politicians are not as dependent on Muslim votes as they are in Sweden.

It is further important to note that, in the Swedish debate, even cultural aspects of honour-based violence have been toned down by prominent politicians, probably also as a result of the Mångfald policy in Swedish society (see f. inst. Demirbag-Sten in Expressen 2010). This refusal to talk in terms of religion, and to some extent culture, points to the Swedish authorities' stress on 'successful' relations with national Muslim umbrella organisations, some of which are part of the network which has close links to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood (Larise 2012). These organisations tend to have a mediatory role between the authorities and the Muslim communities. For instance, the Social Democrats' links to some of these organisations has shown to give individuals in these organisations prominent positions in political life. In a document submitted to the Social Democratic Party's Congress in 2003, the Christian Brotherhood movement within the party presented a plan for continuing co-operation with Muslim national organisations in Sweden. The document stated that this prominent faction in the party had co-operated with some of the Muslim national organisations since 1994, a co-operation which was judged 'very successful' (Socialdemokraternas Broderskapsrörelse 2003).

To return to Hanifa: she gave a second reason for not wanting her children to become 'too Swedish'. This, she stated, was that she wanted them to care about their parents and siblings and to stay close to them. Her statement can be linked to Doosje et al.'s concept of 'perceived group threat', in this situation a threat to her family (2013). It can be argued that this threat is understandable as it has to do with how she was socialised, with the understanding of the family as the main personal safe haven. Socialisation into a collective context with a weak state gives families a similar role to that which the state plays in liberal democracies with a strong state (Hjärpe 2010). It is even possible to see the case of Fadime's honour killing in such a pattern. Fadime had a 'Swedish' (probably Muslim) boyfriend (Wikan 2004). However, Fadime's parents and uncles wanted her to marry within the extended family (Wikan 2004), which, on a

8. Mona Sahlin and Margareta Winberg, both Social Democrats, have held high positions in the party, in Parliament and in government. The main criticism of Sahlin was that she appointed a well-known agitator who denied the existence of honour-based violence, sociologist Masoud Kemali, as an integration expert in 2004.
9. See, for instance, Aftonbladet, 29 April 2013, and Expressen, 29 October 2018.

micro level, was a matter of dealing with a perceived group threat within a family. Through endogenous marriages, more relatives from the homeland can join the group in Sweden and the family can thus gain a stronger position in the majority society. On a macro level, a perceived group threat must be linked to a structural perspective of the group's leaders and the organisations securing their positions. As discussed above in referring to al-Qaradawi's statement, some or many Muslim leaders seem to have an agenda of strengthening the community in order to have a more important role within the majority society, as individuals and as a collective group. This quest for influence can be regarded within the majority-minority pattern. Many of the Muslims leaders in Sweden come from societies where they were part of the majority society, and by coming to Sweden, they became part of minority communities. Thus, they do not have much positive visibility within the majority society. Activity within the Muslim minority can be a means to achieving such visibility and possibly certain forms of power, particularly as the Muslim group increases in number (see Roald 2009).

Moreover, throughout the years, the idea of 'Islam as a way of life', e.g. the notion of '*shumuliyya*' – Islam as 'a comprehensive system' – promoted by the IIFSO books, has frequently been referred to in Muslim communities in Sweden. Many Muslims I observed had not been particularly religiously inclined before they arrived in Sweden, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. However, when they arrived in Sweden, they became interested in Islam and started to read Islamic books from the mosques and Islamic organisations. *Da'is* (people who call to Islam) within the Ikhwani/Wahhabist pattern also played a role in this development towards stronger 'religiosity'. The interviewees explained how they often started to practise 'Islam' according to the understandings of the books which were available, or according to the *da'is'* understanding of Islam. The libraries and bookshops of the mosques and organisations consisted largely of IIFSO books, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s (see Hedin 1988; Otterbeck 2000), and later, in the 1990s and 2000s, books disseminated freely by the Saudi Arabian state with strong Wahhabi content also started to become available. In this way, the Ikhwani/Wahhabi understanding of Islam spread and influenced the development of a certain form of 'Swedish Islam'.

Identity: young Muslims

From the perspective of the Muslim immigrants' children, first-generation Swedish Muslims, the idea of not becoming 'Swedish' might easily turn into a new form of 'personal uncertainty'. These children, born and bred in a Swedish context, tend to understand Swedish cultural codes and feel, to a greater or lesser extent, that they belong in the Swedish cultural context. This is particularly true for children who attended schools in areas which had pupils with a mixture of ethnic identities, including Swedish. It is not always true for children who attended schools in immigrant-dense areas, or private schools of an ethnic or religious kind.

As children reached adolescence, I observed that there was a tendency among their parents to be more culturally protective towards the children and reinforce the stress on not 'becoming Swedish'. This stronger emphasis on ethnicity in various forms, as opposed to Swedish culture, influenced the youths in various ways. Some followed their own ways and continued to mix with their Swedish friends, whereas others tended to listen to their parents and turn towards their own cultural and religious communities. For children raised in immigrant-dense areas, the choice was easy: 'I am Arab, Albanian, Kurdish, etc., Muslim, and I am not Swedish,' as was expressed to me by many Muslims living in immigrant-dense areas. Either way, some individuals encountered an identity crisis if they rejected their parents' way of life. Many young Muslims turned to Islam in various forms during this phase of life, but they did not necessarily embrace their parents' understanding of Islam, as they regarded this to be a cultural understanding from the parents' homelands (see Jacobsen 2011 for deeper discussion). Their idea was, and still is, to turn to 'pure Islam', an understanding which was influenced to a great extent by *Salafi* thought, either in the Muslim Brotherhood sense – Salafi in creed (*aqida*) but not in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) – or in the Salafist sense, with strict adhesion to both Salafi creed and jurisprudence.

For many of the young Muslims, adolescence brought with it strong 'personal uncertainty', as they tended to reject their parents' culture due to a lack of trust in their parents, who had not managed to adapt to Swedish culture. On the other hand, many youths within the Muslim community have internalised a negative view of Swedish identity, as they have internalised the idea

of not being 'Swedish'. They therefore also reject the 'Swedish' way. At this intersection between the parents' and the 'Swedish' 'cultures', the aspect of 'personal uncertainty' becomes obvious. Hoog and Adelman's argument – that individuals try to reduce feelings of uncertainty by identifying particularly with 'distinctive and well-structured groups' with clear boundaries and 'consensual and prescriptive attitudinal and behavioural attributes, grounded in a relatively homogenous world view' (2013: 437) – is well-suited to explain how many young Muslims tend to sympathise with or be activists in such groups.

It is possible to argue, like the Norwegian researcher Østberg, that young (Pakistani) Muslims in Norway tended to develop integrated plural identities (2003). However, her fieldwork was conducted between 1994 and 2001 in Norway, where the number of Muslim immigrants was much smaller than the equivalent number in Sweden. As a minority grows larger in number, there are more opportunities to strengthening the community instead of integrating into majority society. Theories within the field of behavioural economics, for instance, see free choice less as 'rational' and more in terms of the mind being part of a broad network which, to a great extent, involves producing emotions which influence our choices at all times (Lehrer 2010). Moreover, Kahneman has observed that in the decision-making process people often tend to be subject to a 'narrow framing' (2003), a concept explained by Berg as decisions and choices which often end up in the 'default' modus (2014: 224). In other words, the cognitive and emotional filters for choices become norms, social structures and social interactions. Decision-making thus tends to be a result of easy access and/or familiarity and habits, so in this context, the individual within the minority often chooses the minority perspective instead of the majority's. Thaler and Sunstein (2008) observe the familiar, or habitual, aspect of the process of decision-making and see social influences as the most efficient way to 'nudge' people in a certain direction, as human beings have a need to be accepted by the group. According to the behaviourist paradigm, as minorities grow, what is familiar within the group – either the whole picture or parts of it – becomes the choice, thus closing many doors to the majority. I would therefore argue that Østberg's findings of integrated plural identities among Pakistani youths is much less valid for Muslims in contemporary Sweden,

where there are large Muslim minorities, than in Norway, where there were small Muslim minorities in the 1990s, and even still in 2019.

'Perceived injustice' (Doosje et al. 2013), indicated in various forms by many Muslims (and immigrants) in general, is the notion of the difficulties non-ethnic 'Swedes' face in being accepted as 'Swedes' by ethnic 'Swedes', a notion which seems to be pervasive in immigrant communities. Both the Swedish 'Mångfald' and the immigrant idea of the difficulty immigrants face in being regarded as Swedes can be illustrated by a discussion I had with one of my interviewees in 2010: a 20-year-old Kurdish man who had come to Sweden from Baghdad with his parents as a toddler. As we were discussing identity, when asked about his identity, he said he was 'Kurdish'. I then asked what *national* identity he had, and he again stated 'Kurdish'. I asked him then whether he meant Iraqi identity, which he strongly denied. (His stress on Kurdish identity versus Iraqi identity is obviously due to the Kurdish conflict, which I will not discuss in this article.) I then asked him about having any Swedish identity, which he again fervently denied. When asked why, he said that he did not want to be a 'svenne' (a degrading term for ethnic Swedes used among immigrants). When asked what country he would prefer to live in, he said Sweden. Seemingly realising a certain dissonance in his answers, he added that (ethnic) Swedes would not believe him if he ever stated that he was Swedish, and would probably make a laughing stock of him. 'I will never be regarded as Swedish because of my black hair,' he said, 'even if I lived here for 100 years.' When I asked whether he had ever tried to tell anybody he was 'Swedish', he said no.

This story is important as it indicates (1) a strong emphasis on ethnicity in minority communities, (2) a certain minority-majority tension on the part of the minority, (3) a lack of sense of belonging to Swedish society despite regarding Sweden as a preferred place to live, and (4) an idea of ethnic 'Swedes' rejecting a Swedish identity of non-ethnic 'Swedes'. In this case, the latter notion is an idea rather than a lived experience. I have had similar experiences with other Muslims. The attempt to assert themselves as 'Swedes' seems never to be an option. All aspects of the young Kurd's statements indicate the role of the Swedish 'Mångfald' as separating the majority from minorities. By offering the option of staying apart from society, segregation be-

comes a strongly preferred option due mainly to 'personal uncertainty', 'perceived injustice' and 'perceived group threat' (Doosje, Loseman, and van der Bos 2013) as discussed above.

Another example to note is how the paradigm that permeates Muslim communities, which regards Sweden as a racist country, might lead young Muslims who have grown up in Sweden to be highly critical of 'Swedes' and Sweden in general. A young Swedish-Somali journalist, Bilan Osman, stated in an interview in November 2020 that her parents always talked about racism when she was a child and an adolescent (DN 2020). Although at the time she saw this as her parents constantly 'going on about' the issue, as an adult, she felt that it was positive, as it let her understand that prejudices were not her fault. However, Osman also discusses the notion of having Swedish identity, which she did not have as an adolescent. As an adult, however, she is more comfortable with being Swedish with parents from Somalia. Osman is educated and is married to a person outside the Somali community. Her broader reflections on Swedish identity might, however, not be similar to those of young Muslims with less education and who are more intertwined with their Muslim ethnic communities than Osman is. Osman's reflections indicate, however, how young Muslims are socialised into a negative view of Swedish society, a socialisation which might make young Muslims, and some (or many) adult Muslims, reject belonging to Swedish society.

In my experiences from being part of both the majority society and minority Muslim communities, the policy of Mångfald grants the majority the option of not mixing with minorities, and also gives minorities an excuse not to engage in the majority society on a more profound level than in work situations.

Reflections

Muslim parental strategies in dealing with the next generation based on a perception of threat towards the group, the whole community or the family have been discussed above. The main strategy seems to be a focus on children not becoming 'too Swedish' (försvenskad). However, another important aspect seems to be the Swedish policy of Mångfald, which, by minorities, often is understood in terms of developing minority cultur-

al traits rather than integration into majority society. This creates opportunities for the immigrant community to stay aloof from the majority society. Even Swedish welfare plays a role, as providing social protection to everybody with citizenship or a residence permit creates few demands to adapt to the majority society. The uncertainty the parental generation has experienced in facing a new society is transferred to and modified by the next generation. Identity issues, implied in the pattern of uncertainty, make (some or many) young Muslims choose a different understanding of Islam than the parent generation. The perceived discrepancy between identity choices – 'Swedish', the parents' national identity or 'Muslim' – might create a search for 'distinctive and well-structured groups' with clear boundaries with 'consensual and prescriptive attitudinal and behavioural attributes grounded in a relatively homogenous world view' (Hogg and Adelman 2013: 437). This choice is based on a wish to reduce the self-uncertainty created by this discrepancy between the identities presented by the parent generation's rejection of Swedish identity (Hogg and Adelman 2013: 437). Although unintentional, the parent generation, as well as Swedish policy, may have played prominent roles in creating a new Swedish Muslim generation with little or no loyalty to Swedish majority society.

The main conclusion of the discussion above is that the Swedish policy of Mångfald creates distinctions between the majority and minority, as well as between minorities themselves. The stress on group belonging tends to result in minority thinking, with emphasis on the differences between groups, instead of regarding each individual in Sweden as a fully-fledged member of society. The new plurality in Sweden, where many individuals have either been born outside Sweden or have parents who immigrated to Sweden during the last several decades, probably creates a need to develop society in a direction of loyalty to co-citizens, as well as to authorities.

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