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Muslim Participation in the Public Sphere in Sweden

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By

Imad Rasan

University of Gothenburg

Supervisor

Håkan Thörn

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate Muslims' participation in the various public spheres in Sweden. Using case study and discourse analysis as methods, textual and visual material from Swedish mass media has been analysed to explore certain questions. The results show that there are three types of Islamic public sphere: the distinctive Sunni, the distinctive Shi'ite and the open type. In addition, there is Muslim participation in the central Swedish public sphere. The results also show that there are three different perceptions of Swedish society, and its dominant norms and values. The first perception is of Swedish society as completely different, in its dominant liberal norms and values, from Islamic communities. The second perception is that Swedish society is fragmented in terms of its dominant norms and values; most of the values are acceptable but the norms should be refused. Muslims with the third perception see Swedish society as diverse and multicultural, comprising numerous groups including the Muslim community; they regard most dominant Swedish norms and values as supplementing those of Islam, and combine them in a single Swedish Islamic identity.

__Keywords__: public sphere, Islamic collective identity, secularism, postcolonialism, norms and values.

INTRODUCTION

On a Saturday afternoon, 11 December 2010, central Stockholm was shaken by an explosion. This abortive attack, which killed only the suicide bomber in question while wounding two passers-by, was the first of its kind in Swedish history. Because the suicide bomber was a Muslim, the attack raised questions about Islam and Muslims in Sweden. In fact, Muslims in Sweden have distanced themselves from this terrorist attack and all terrorist acts by radical groups in the name of Islam. However, this has not stopped the re-asking of questions about Islam and Muslims in Western societies, including Sweden, after every potential terrorist threat or attack. The most important of these questions is whether Islamic norms and values[1] are compatible with Western societies' dominant norms and values, such as democracy, integration, human rights and freedom of religion. Consequently, Muslims have been in focus and in the forefront of all forms of mass media owing to the self-presentation of Islam and Muslims in Western public spheres. Some of these Muslims presented themselves conspicuously in the

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[1] In this paper, norms are: 'explicit or implicit social expectations and informal rules that derive from and operationalize societal values. Unlike values, norms prescribe and regulate specific forms of behavior'. However, values in sociology are 'the beliefs, traditions, and social customs that are held dear and upheld by individuals and society. Values influence the behavior of individuals, families, groups, and entire nations' (oxfordreference.com).

Swedish media in 2008 when three young religious women, wearing the *hijab*[2], presented a programme called *Halal-TV*[3] on Swedish television.

This paper investigates Muslims'[4] participation in Swedish public spheres in order to gain an understanding of how they present themselves and Islam. The aim of this study is to clarify Muslims' self-presentation in Swedish public spheres by following their activities in Swedish mass media, such as websites, magazines, TV and newspapers. The study also aims to detect differences, if any, among Muslims themselves — between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, or between groups within the Sunni tradition, for instance — in their perceptions and dealings with dominant Swedish norms and values, as reflected in their self-presentation. In my research, I have found no studies of Islam and Muslim participation in Swedish public spheres that include distinctions among different Muslim groups' discourses in Swedish mass media.

Using discourse analysis and case study as a method, I have analysed documents and visual material from November 2008, when the controversial *Halal-TV* programme was broadcast on Swedish TV, to March 2011, three months after the failed terror attack in Stockholm in December 2010. To achieve the exploratory aims of this study, three research questions are investigated. First, how do Muslims perceive[5] the dominant Swedish norms and values, such as democracy, integration and individual freedom? Second, how do Muslims present themselves and Islam in the Swedish public spheres — in Swedish mass media, such as TV, debates, websites, newspapers and magazines? Third, how far do these Muslims consider Islamic norms and values to be compatible with dominant Swedish ones? The answer to the first question is a basis for answering the second, and the second is a basis for answering the third. In conclusion, I will discuss three issues by problematising these issues and also raise future research issues.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The public sphere

'Public sphere' is a metaphor describing both virtual and material space that includes an area of social life in which people can interact by exchanging ideas, remoulding public opinions and discussing issues, in order to form a mutual agreement and 'common mind' about general issues, matters and interests. This public sphere is located between the spheres of privacy and authority: it is neither private nor authoritative, but between the two (Jürgen Habermas, 1989). Today, according to Habermas (1989), the media —television and radio, newspapers and magazines — are regarded as part of the public sphere.

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[2] 'A head covering worn in public by some Muslim women' (oxfordreference.com).

[3] *Halal* is what is right and *haram* is what is wrong, according to one of the programme presenters.

[4] In this paper, 'Muslims' are defined as those who participate in the various public spheres.

[5] In this paper, how Muslims 'perceive' Swedish norms and values means the way in which they present them in speech and writing.

Habermas (1989) considers the public sphere to be a single, overarching, unitary order. From this perspective, he asserts that the public sphere is liberal and bourgeois in social structural terms. It is a space in which reason is used as a means of deliberation and discussion, to build a rational critical consensus rather than submitting to the will of law or God, power, God's purposes or traditional authority. The aim is that people should be equal in the public sphere, and participation should be universally accessible.

However, Nancy Fraser (1990, p.67, 2007) considers the public sphere to be a multiple segmented sphere that is characterised by counterpublic and sub-public spheres. This perspective is presented in her approach to the 'multiple public' in relation to egalitarian and multicultural societies. She terms it the *subaltern counterpublic sphere*, and it involves diverse cultures and identities. Undoubtedly, this publicness of cultures and identities means that subordinate group may shape parallel discursive arenas in the public sphere.

Fraser (1990) argues that the bourgeois or liberal model of the public sphere, as articulated by Habermas, is no longer applicable in the 'social welfare state' or 'mass democracy'. She regards the counterpublic sphere as a reaction to oppression from the dominant public sphere — a space where individuals, groups and identities compete and conflict with, and differentiate from, one another, and where they may be persuaded to achieve the common good by contention. Indeed, there are empirically different types of counterpublic sphere, such as 'Islamic public spheres' (Fraser, 2007).

The question is whether the counterpublic sphere, as described by Fraser, can explain the dissimilarities between different counterpublic spheres or among the cultures, ethnicities and ideologies within one counterpublic sphere, or the relationships among these groups and with other groups outside the counterpublic sphere. We have to acknowledge that there is not always a homogeneous dominant discourse within a single counterpublic sphere, although the members have same collective identity, such as Islamic identity.

Different types of public sphere

In order to understand the differences among Black public spheres in the USA, Catherine R. Squires (2002: p.448) describes three types of marginal public sphere that are created as political responses and in reaction to the oppression and exclusionary politics of the state and dominant public sphere, on the one hand, and to internal politics within a particular public sphere on the other. In fact, these spheres' multiple publics are mainly differentiated by group identities, such as ethnicity, gender, race, religious minority or immigrant group, and these groups and identities create a counterpublic as a collective identity that emerges to articulate the exclusions to which they were subjected. Hence they perceive themselves explicitly as alternative collectives, according to Asen and Young (as cited by Squires, 2002).

The first response is what Squires calls the 'enclave'. In this type of public sphere, groups who are disadvantaged need safe spaces. These can be used to create discourses that are hidden from

the view of the dominant public and state. In order to survive, the enclave develops certain tactics, such as a network for hidden communication, consisting of a transcript and the group's memory, to guard against unwanted publicity for the group's opinions and support its effort to resist oppression from the dominant public. According to Squires (2002), this public sphere has material, political, legal and media resources, and its aim is to preserve culture, foster resistance and create strategies for the future.

The second response is a counterpublic sphere, created as a result of increased public communication between the marginal and dominant public spheres. The discourses of the counterpublic move outside the safe spaces of the enclave in order to discuss and argue against the group's dominant conceptions and to describe group interests. There is no hidden transcript, as in the enclave. However, the counterpublic aims to test the reaction of the wider publics by declaring opinions that would be hidden in the enclave, and using persuasive tactics to change the opinion of the dominant public, for example its stereotype of Blacks, and to seek solidarity with other marginal groups. The resources of this public sphere are the independent media and distribution channels. Moreover, the counterpublic encourages its members to participate in the wider publics to discuss, debate and share their opinions across space and time through the mass media. The aim of this public sphere is to test arguments and strategies in the wider publics, create alliances and persuade outsiders to change views (Squires, 2002).

The third response is the satellite public sphere, which is distanced from wider publics by the impact of oppression by the dominant public and state. This public sphere is formed by collectives that do not agree with or accept discourse or interdependency with other publics. However, this public sphere may be able to connect with wider publics when there is clear convergence of their interests or when their practices have caused friction and been controversial in these wider publics. According to Squires (2002), the resources of this public sphere are the consolidation of group media and the material resources to be used by the group. The aim of this public sphere is to maintain a solid group identity and strengthen its own institutions, such as the Nation of Islam in the Black public sphere.

Wrench and Solomos (as cited by Asad, 2003) emphasise that Muslims in European society, for example, are misrepresented in the media and discriminated against by non-Muslims. Salwa Ismail (2008) also supports this claim concerning inequality and varied rates of self-presentation among groups in the public sphere.

In this study, Squires' perspective is used to analyse differences between Islamic public spheres in Sweden. Being multicultural, Swedish society comprises various groups that have their own counterpublic spheres. Squires' theory has gone far beyond that of Habermas and Fraser in their analysis of the welfare state, and of multicultural and global societies. Squires' theory is an adequate means of understanding differences between different Islamic public spheres and their relationships with the central Swedish public sphere.

Islamic public spheres in the West

There is a *distinctive Islamic public sphere* in the global north — part of a global Islamic public sphere — that can be understood in terms of Squires' notion of a satellite public sphere[6]. This Islamic public sphere is transnational in that it addresses Muslim (particularly Sunni) communities in Western societies, as elements in the international Muslim community known as the *Ummah*[7]. The main function of this public sphere is to maintain Muslims' solid group identity in the international context by strengthening certain independent Islamic institutions. This public sphere has distanced itself from the dominant public sphere, in order to create a homogeneous religious discourse remote from the dominant public, which is secular.

Mohammed el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis (2010) studied two famous Islamic websites[8] that aim to build a virtual Islamic *Ummah*. The public sphere in which these sites are involved is regarded as an active marketplace or *souk* in which diverse 'goods' are exchanged, bought and sold, but this occurs in the form of ideas and concepts about Islam and Muslims. The discourse that takes place in this Islamic public sphere leads imperatively to achieving *al-maslaha al-amma* (the common good). On the other hand, Ramadan (1999) claims that, to be legitimate, *al-maslaha al-amma* should be based on the Quran and *Sunna*[9] traditions.

There is another type of Islamic public sphere in the West, which may be understood as a 'counterpublic sphere' in Squires' typology. In Sweden, for example, this Islamic public sphere is the national public sphere, in contrast to the distinctive public sphere mentioned above. This is because it addresses Muslim communities, as well as other Westerners who are non-Muslims, in their national Swedish context. We may therefore call this an 'open' Islamic public sphere because it addresses everyone in the society and may also present non-Muslim material. One of this public sphere's functions is to construct a national Islamic identity by combining Islamic norms and values with Western ones. In this case, one may be able to find extensive public communication between this public sphere and the dominant one. Moreover, the discourse of this public sphere is present in the dominant public sphere, changing the views of the dominant public and thereby trying to change the stereotype of Islam and Muslims.

Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal (1997) asserts that, since 1945, the emphasis has been on citizens' rights in a national context. She uses postwar Muslim immigrants' experiences in Europe as empirical evidence in her study. These national citizenship rights are associated with universalist norms, such as human rights, equality and democracy. For example, in response to the banning of the veil in French schools, the Great Mosque in Paris has declared that

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[6] I do not call this public sphere an 'enclave public sphere' because nothing in it is hidden: neither the discourse, nor the communication network nor the transcript.

[7] According to Ramadan (1999), the *Ummah* is a Muslim community shaped by faith, feeling, fraternity and fate.

[8] Islamonline.net and islamway.com.

[9] 'Sunna' means here the prophetic traditions, as the second source of the *sharia* (Ramadan, 1999).

prohibition of veil-wearing is a form of discrimination that violates individual rights, rather than religious tradition or duties (Soysal, 1997, p. 516).

Shi'ite Muslims have their own *distinctive Islamic public sphere*, which may also be understood as a satellite public sphere in Squires' typology, because it addresses Shi'ite Muslim communities in the West in order to construct a moral collective identity in the national context and not a transnational one, such as a distinctive Sunni public sphere. This Shi'ite public sphere is based on Islamic ethical theory and can give members of the Shi'ite Muslim group, as well as other members of society, the rational advantage or 'the good'. Hamid Haji Haider (2008) claims that the rational advantage, as well as the good, follows from Rawls' ideas concerning the achievement of the good[10]. For Shi'ites, the good is achieved by following the moral and political values that should be obtained first from the Quran; second, from prophetic traditions; third, from the twelve 'infallible Imams'[11]; and fourth, from some kind of intellectual demonstration.

Nevertheless, there are two dominant theories in Shi'ite intellectual thought, which is based on the Shi'ite moral system. According to Haider (2008), the *first* theory is 'Islamic political theory' and the *second* is 'Islamic ethical theory'. The *first* applies only in areas where society is largely shaped by the Muslim population. This theory no longer applies in Western societies, because Muslims are a minority there. However, the *second* (ethical theory) should be universally applicable: it deals with Shi'ite duties at the individual level: individual practices should guide self-development and personal progress, including daily prayers, annual fasting during Ramadan and the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca (Haider, 2008). The distinctive Shi'ite public sphere has therefore distanced itself from the dominant public, in order to create a homogeneous religious discourse remote from dominant one, which is secular.

In brief, there are two forms of Islamic public sphere. *First*, there are the distinctive Islamic public spheres: the Sunni Muslim sphere in the global northern context and the Shi'ite Muslim one in the national context. *Second*, there is the open public sphere in the national context.

Muslim identity formation in European societies

Ismail (2008) argues that the Islamic public sphere is not only an arena for deliberation and debate but, rather, a space for formulation of Islamic *collective identity* through, for instance, performances, subjectivities, visual displays, validation and authorisation.

According to Zygmunt Bauman (1992), collective identity — which is based on national thoughts as a model — is shaped by discourses in which identities and counter-identities are conceived and by which they are sustained. It is formulated as a sample of a large family and

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[10] The 'good', as referred to by Shi'ite Muslims, resembles the Sunni Muslims' above-mentioned 'common good'.
[11] The 'twelve infallible Imams' are those who consecutively succeeded the Prophet in his mission (Haider, 2008).

then set apart by its exclusivity: it depends on a binary division of the world into friends and enemies. Bauman (1992, p. 679) says 'the "we" made of inclusion, accepting and configuration is the realm of gratifying safety cut out (though never securely enough) from the frightening wilderness of the outside populated by "them"'. Obviously, the inclusion and exclusion process is always working to secure the borders of identity. Håkan Thörn (1997) makes a distinction between internal and external demarcations of the collective identity. This distinction emphasises the demarcations among and within subgroups such as that between Sunni and other Muslim groups.

With reference to Thörn's (1997) internal and external dimensions in the demarcations of collective identity, Islamic collective identity has various external guises in the various public spheres in the West, in terms of the non-Muslim 'Other'. In general, Tariq Ramadan (1999) defines a person with Muslim personal identity as one who recites a statement of *shahada*[12], and Islamic collective identity as membership of the *Ummah*.

In fact, Ramadan (1999) describes three external forms of Muslim collective identity in relation to non-Muslim others in the European context. The *first* form is that of Muslims who confine their faith to leading a private life and being a citizen first, and being a Muslim second. In brief, Ramadan calls them 'European Muslims without Islam', i. e. those who are assimilated into European society.

The *second* form characterises Muslims who tend to belong more to the Muslim community, protecting their own identity by maintaining the traditions and cultures they have brought from their countries of origin. They are simply following the internal rules of their Muslim community, including the *sharia*[13], even if they dress in a modern way. According to Ramadan (1999), those who practise their religion in this way are living in, and yet outside, Europe. According to el-Nawawy and Khamis (2010), this type of Islamic collective identity has two aims: one is to increase solidarity, uniformity and cohesion between those who share Muslim collective identity and belong to the international *Ummah* and the Muslim community. The other is to widen the gap and demarcate the boundaries between divergent identities within one society, in order to distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims, and between different categories of Muslims, such as Sunnis and Shi'ites.

The *third* form is the Islamic collective identity that is integrated into European society without any loss of religious affiliation. Here, there are no contrasts between being both a Muslim and a citizen, as long as the Muslim fulfils the commitment to act according to the law of the country

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[12] *Shahada* is a statement of belief in God and his last envoy, the prophet Muhammad, according to Ramadan (1999).

[13] The *Sharia* consists of laws derived from the Quran and the Sunna. Here, 'Sunna' is not the well-known sectarian group called 'Sunni Muslims' but the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, as the second source of the Sharia (Ramadan, 1999).

concerned. No one demands that part from one's religious identity should be cut off. Ramadan (1999) calls this third form of identity a middle way between the first two mentioned above.

In discussing the third form, Soysal (1997) argues that the Muslim collective identity in the West has been redefined as a political term, as well as part of universal values such as human rights, equality and freedom. Ingvar Svanberg and David Westerlund (1999) declare that Islam, as a religion, was brought to Sweden by immigrants and established in Swedish society long ago. In fact, there were different Islamic organisations with a variety of activities in Sweden as much as 50 years ago. These organisations were created by several different groups, such as Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, and they aim to shape a Swedish Islamic identity in the Swedish national context, in the form of 'blue-yellow Islam'[14].

Concerning Shi'ite Muslims, there is no formation of a collective Islamic *political* identity in the West. According to Haider (2008), the Shi'ites have a collective Islamic *moral* identity that is based on loyalty to the Shi'ite group, as well as a common view of relationships with other parts of society. In fact, this identity refers to the individual level of ethical theory, as mentioned above. Obviously, this *moral* identity also involves a sense of 'we' and 'them', and the process of discursive inclusion and exclusion (Bauman, 1992).

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[14] 'Blue-yellow' refers to the colours of the Swedish flag (Svanberg & Westerlund, 1999).

Typology of the Muslims' participation in the public spheres in Sweden

Types of Islamic public sphere	Comparison with Squires' typology	Community	Correspondence with dominant PS	Beneficiaries of common good	Main function of Islamic PS
Distinctive Islamic PS	Distinctive Sunni PS (satellite)	Sunni Muslim community	No correspondence	Muslim community only	Transnational: constructing an international Islamic identity (*Ummah*)
	Distinctive Shi'ite PS(satellite)	Shi'ite Muslim community	No correspondence	Muslim community and whole of society	National: constructing an Islamic moral identity
Open Islamic PS	Open Islamic PS (counterpublic)	Muslim community, as well as, other persons in the societies	Supplementary	Muslim community and whole of society	National: constructing Islamic identity as part of citizenship in the national context
Muslim participation in dominant PS	Participation in dominant PS	All members of society	Integrated	Whole of society	National: changing dominant public views and stereotypes of Islam and Muslim

Religion in the secular public sphere

Olivier Roy (2007) says that the vital issue concerning *secularism* is how religious identity is articulated in the secular public sphere. Roy (2007, p.8) claims that '*The final stage of secularization is the disappearance of religion, smoothly and gently accomplished*'. Yet secularism, as a political doctrine, is not in fact antireligious[15] in its formulation. Charles Taylor (as quoted by Asad, 2003) states that one purpose of secularism is to define a political ethics, altogether independent of religious faith, that unites all the parties. Habermas (2006, p.7) asserts that the standard version of political liberalism is the requirement of 'secular justifications'. He

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[15] According to Roy (2007), secularism means simply separating the religious and political spheres, although under the law of 1905 French state secularism (*laïcité*) seeks to separate them at a social level, and represents a very strict separation of church and state.

means that in the liberal state only secular reasons count; those who are religious and adhere to their faith are obliged to find a balance between their religious and their secular conviction.

In fact, and from historical and anthropological viewpoints, Islam has experienced secularisation in both political and sociological terms. Taylor (2011) claims that there is nothing to prevent Muslims from integrating into Western societies as well as Christians can, and Islam has been able to recast itself as one of several religions in the secular space and become compatible with secularism. If Muslims are prevented from becoming integrated, it is just because of prejudice and bad management.

Nonetheless, Roy (2007) claims that, with their experience of everyday life in Western societies, Muslims could adapt to secularism by developing certain practices and compromises. Thus, there is no authentic contradiction between Islam and secularism in practice, according to Roy (2007).

The problem is that there is no church in Islam to be separated from the state or politics. Rather, there is *sharia'*, as a way of life, instead of a church, and *sharia* is a problem when it encounters secularism (Asad, 2003). However, Roy (2007) regards the *sharia* as just an ideal or even a political slogan. In this case and according to Habermas (2011), the problem of religion is that it draws its legitimacy and its power to convince from its own roots, which are independent of politics. Another problem is that secular ethics have been connected to Western values and the history of colonialism. According to Roy (2007), the rise of secularism has its historical roots in specifically Christian elements in the West and is considered to be a Western cultural outcome. In fact, many Muslims regard secularism in Muslim countries as one of the colonial outcomes (Asad, 2003).

In this sense, Shi'ite Muslims have no obligation to practise the *sharia* like some *salafi*[16] Sunni Muslims. In fact, Shi'ite Muslims distinguish between political and ethical theory. The ideas of Shi'ite Muslims are compatible with secular liberalism. Haider (2008, p. 22) asserts that 'there is a wide scope for reconciliation between liberal states and Shi'ite Muslim minorities'. Freedom of religion, availability of religious teaching and freedom to practise Islamic ethical duties are nonetheless needed by Shi'ite minorities in non-religious societies (Haider, 2008).

In brief, there is no contradiction between Islam and secularism at the theoretical level. The problem is a political one on the practical level when, first, Muslims associate secularism with Christianity and colonialism and, second, Western countries are somewhat prejudiced against Islam and not good at managing Muslim integration into society.

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[16] There are three different tendencies in Salafism: (1) 'Salafi literalism', referring to the Quran and Sunna, which was conveyed by *salaf* ('companions of the Prophet and pious Muslims of the first three generations of Islam', in Ramadan's phrase); (2) 'Salafi reformism', referring to a rereading of the Quran and Sunna in order to avoid interpretations made by schools of jurisprudence; (3) 'Political literalist Salafism', referring to to rereading of the Quran and Sunna , like Salafi reformism but based on political connotations concerning the management of power, authority, law etc. (Ramadan, 2004).

Islamic public spheres and postcolonialist theories

Ismail (2008) claims that integration of Muslims, as minorities, in the Western liberal public sphere is analogous to the old relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. She writes (2008, p. 25) that 'the dominant groups in Western societies tap into historical constructions of the 'Others', while Muslim minorities, among others, in the West are informed by the legacies of colonialism'. The images of the 'Others' in the colonial discourse that were developed in colonial practice are placed in a new context in the West.

Edward Said's (2003) theory about *Orientalism* describes how the West produced knowledge about the Middle East. He attempts to explain a structural set of concepts, assumptions, hypothesis and discursive practices that were used to produce, construct, create, interpret and evaluate knowledge about non-European people.

According to Said (2003), 'Orientalism' was created by Europeans to refer to the 'Others', non-Westerners from the Middle East, North Africa and other Muslim regions. 'Orientalism' is a way of understanding, interpreting, evaluating and observing the Orient. Said (2003) claims that the media have played a negative role in propagating and extending culturally stereotyped images of Arabs and, especially, Muslims, through standardised information and cultural stereotyping.

METHOD

Case study and discourse analysis as methods are combined to analyse all the documents and material. The focus of inquiry in this study is three sets of contextual material that shape three units of the analysis, divided according to the addressees of discourses in the public spheres (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The *first* set comprises documents written by Muslims and published in the distinctive Islamic Sunni, as well as Shi'ite, Muslim public spheres. The *second* is documents written by Muslims and published in the open Islamic public sphere. The *third* is composed of documents published in the Swedish central public sphere, and the visual materials are eight episodes of the *Halal-TV* programme and some debate programmes about *Halal-TV*. All the documents and material were written and are narrated in the Swedish language. In this paper, the Swedish central public sphere, which is regarded as the dominant public sphere, consists of a combination of Swedish TV, magazines and most established newspapers and debate websites.

The reason for using multiple sources is to make a chain of evidence to improve the quality of this study by increasing the reliability of information and validity of investigation. Replication logic is used and results from the various sources are tested (Yin, 2009). Since this study relates

to three contexts, a multiple-case design is used. This permits replication of the results obtained from these various contexts.

The documents and material were collected from various sources and cover a specific period: from November 2008 to March 2011. The specific period of this study begins in November 2008, when Swedish TV started to broadcast *Halal-TV*. The study period ends in March 2011, three months after the failed terrorist bombing in Stockholm, in order to cover most of the reactions about this event in the Swedish mass media. An exception is made for some articles about the norms of the Shi'ite Muslims, which date from 2005 and 2006, because of the limited material available.

The websites from which the texts were taken were accessed in various ways. One way was clicking on links in these websites to explore more sites; these Islamic sites were then tested in the analysis to determine their visitor numbers or ranking. A second was following Muslims online. This was done after viewing these individuals on Swedish TV, when they appeared as guests to discuss social issues. Sites were selected for their comprehensiveness, content and relevance. The material collected was written by website users and published in form of discussion and debate. No official documents written by organisations or by newspaper and website owners were analysed. This was because I wished to analyse documents that may be considered to be part of the public discussion in various public spheres.

In the *first* context, there is a separation between distinctive Islamic Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim public spheres. Twelve articles from two Sunni Muslim websites, 'islamguiden.se' and 'ummahobserver.com', are analysed. The website 'islamguiden.se', founded in 1997, is described as a non-profit political affiliate that aims to convey a balanced and true picture of Islam online. This site was chosen as one of Internet World's best sites in 2001 and rated 9 out of 10. The other, 'ummahobserver.com', is a well-visited site, popular among Sunni Muslims because of its many activities and links to other sites.[17] Seventeen articles were obtained from two Shi'ite Muslim websites, 'nooralislam.net' and 'minhijab.nu'. The former is well designed and bilingual (Swedish and English), with abundant material emphasising Shi'ite Muslim norms and values. This site has more than 5000 visitors a day (according to alexa.com). The latter, 'minhijab.nu', is an e-magazine that focuses on Shi'ite Muslim norms and, in particular, Muslim women's use of the veil.

The *second* context involves two famous Islamic websites and 12 articles are obtained from these websites. The first is a forum called 'Swedish Muslim forum' (svenskmuslim.se). In this forum, many Muslims and non-Muslims discuss and share opinions about political and social issues with one another from an Islamic point of view. The second is an assembly of bloggers who argue about different political and social issues from an Islamic point of view and many people

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[17] Unfortunately, the website is temporarily down, and this happened after the material was analysed.

comment on these bloggers' debate articles. This website is called 'Muslim perspectives' (muslimskaperspektiv.blogspot.se).

The *third* context involves articles written by Muslims in the Swedish media and visual material comprising episodes of *Halal-TV* and three debate programmes about *Halal-TV*. Each episode is 30 minutes long. This programme was a copy of another programme shown in the Netherlands under the same name. *Halal-TV* was controversial because it had been widely criticised in the Swedish media even before being broadcast. It was stopped after the eighth episode and replaced by a debate programme that discussed *Halal-TV* and the role of religion in the secular and liberal public sphere (svd.se).

In addition, the documents used as evidence were collected from different sources to form three analytical units, each of which has its own conclusion. The overall strategy used to analyse data in this paper relies on theoretical propositions, and the technique used to analyse these data, allowing comparison of evidence and conclusions, is known as 'cross-case synthesis study' (Yin, 2006). All the material, including the visual, is analysed as a text (Altheide, 1996).

Discourse analysis

According to Marianne Jorgensen & Louise Phillips (2005), discourse analysis is not only used as a method for data analyses. Rather, it is a theoretical and methodological whole. In this case, language works as a means of or, rather, a channel for conveying facts about the world, as well as construing social reality. The theory is influenced by structuralist and poststructuralist linguistics (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2005).

Discourse analysis consists of three approaches: discourse theory, critical discourse analysis and discourse psychology (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2005, p.1). In this paper, the former approach is used to analyse data material. The key concepts used in this approach are *nodal points*, *the field of discursivity* and *closure*, in the terminology of Laclau and Mouffe as used by Jorgensen & Phillips (2005, p.26), who write: 'A *nodal point* is a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point.' This privileged sign is perceived as the centre of the discourse, such as 'democracy', which is considered to be a nodal point in the political realm.

The signs that predominate in a particular discourse are understood as moments that are mutually related like knots in a fishing-net. Each one of these moments has its meaning, which is acquired from the nodal point and set through differences from the others (differential positions). In order to create unity of meaning, each sign and moment is excluded from other signs and moments by a specific discourse. These moments, which shape the discourse, are articulated in practice through the field of discursivity, which works as a reservoir for the 'surplus of meaning'. The closure then puts a temporary stop to the changing of the meaning of signs and moments in order to establish a discourse.

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Between the discourses, there is a partial fixation of meaning through exclusion or inclusion of the possible meanings of the signs that are fixed as moments through their relationship to other signs in a particular discourse. However, the field of discursivity refers to any potential meaning outside the specific discourse, to set limits among discourses in a single terrain. In other words, the field of discursivity refers to the social space in which different discourses compete, in the same terrain, to fill each discourse with meaning in their own particular way. This does not mean that each discourse will become free from the others, but this is an area of antagonism: the various discourses struggle and conflict with one another in order that one should predominate over the others. In the field of antagonism among these discourses, conflicts may be resolved by 'hegemonic interventions' that, by means of force, reconstitute unambiguity (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2005).

Ethics

The *ethical issue* is that there are some topics that are sensitive or taboo for some groups, particularly minority groups, because each of these groups has its own religious and cultural specificities and identities. In this research, their human subjects' personal, as well as social, identity should be protected. The data and material are therefore treated carefully and with caution, in order to protect the cultural properties of some groups, especially in the cross-cultural contexts where values and beliefs may be collective and hierarchical (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This study involves differences among Muslim groups that have divergent approaches towards some sensitive issues, such as homosexuality or abortion.

ANALYSIS

Muslim community context

Distinctive Islamic public sphere of the Sunni Muslims in Sweden

This *distinctive* Sunni Islamic public sphere is created as a 'satellite' public sphere (Squires, 2002). It arises as a religious alternative to the central Swedish public sphere, which is a secular, and this may considered, in Asen and Young's terminology (as citied by Squires, 2002), as 'alternative' collective. In fact, this public sphere addresses the Muslim community in Sweden, particularly Sunni Muslims, in order to fulfil two functions.

The *first function* is to construct an Islamic collective identity that is related to and part of the Muslim international community — the *Ummah ,* as the term is used by el-Nawawy and Khamis (2010), who refer to a virtual online *Ummah*. In this case, the websites that have been studied publish material from Muslims worldwide, who use English (e.g. at islamguiden.se). As Squires (2002) describes in the satellite public sphere, Muslim participants attempt to strengthen their own institutions within their community. Abdus Salaam (2010) encourages Muslims not to vote

in elections and to do something that may help the Muslim community. He writes: 'Strengthen the Muslim community, the *Ummah*, in Sweden' (ummahobserver.com).

In fact, this Islamic collective identity is formulated, discursively, in the form of 'We' against the 'Others' (Bauman, 1992 & Thörn, 1997). The empirical material confirms this approach; most articles begin with 'we against them', 'they who are non-Muslim and perceive us as Muslims', etc'[18]. See Salaam (2010).

This indicates a salient exclusion of non-Muslims. Likewise, the deliberations and debates found in these websites attempt to build a sense of belonging, in the form of the '"We' who answer religious questions with the *fatwa*'[19] (see islamguiden.se).

The *second function* is to draw a distinction from others, who are non-practising Muslims and non-Sunni Muslims. This distinction is drawn by Squires (2002) concerning diverse internal affairs within a particular public sphere and by el-Nawawy and Khamis (2010) concerning second aim which refers to widen the gap between different categories of Muslims. The empirical material refers to the exclusion of non-Sunni Muslims, and this appears clearly in the websites, which focus on Sunni Muslims' tradition sources, such as the *sharia*. Moreover, the exclusion also applies to non-practising Muslims who have adapted to Western norms and values, whom some Muslims call 'alienated'. Abdus Salaam (2011) writes about a category of Muslims who are encouraged to integrate into Swedish society, and adapt to Western norms and values, at the expense of their Islamic identity. Salaam calls them 'house Muslims'. He writes that 'among Muslims, we talk about two different groups of Muslims: house Muslims and field Muslims'[20] (ummahobserver.com).

The above quotation was inspired by the internationally famous Muslim activist Malcolm X[21], an important figurehead among Muslims in Sweden. Discussions among Muslims in this public sphere depend on a specific process of exclusion and inclusion of certain Swedish dominant norms and values.

Swedish liberal values are excluded from this discourse for two reasons. First, these values are associated with those of the West and perceived as an outcome of colonialism, as referred to by Roy (2007) and Asad (2003). Jakob Daniel (2010) is sceptical about all democratic systems in the West, but he urges Muslims to vote for Muslim candidates to prevent the 'Sverigedemokraterna' (SD) from winning parliamentary elections. He writes: 'Vote for Muslim candidates in your constituency!' and 'The democracy of the West is associated with colonialism' (ummahobserver.com).

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[18] These phrases occur in almost all the texts on the websites (see ummahobserver.com and islamguiden.se).
[19] The *fatwa* is an answer to questions by scholars (Ramadan, 2004).
[20] By analogy, 'field Muslims' know who they are and what injustice they have experienced in society. In contrast, 'house Muslims' are very quick to please the politicians and conform to western notions of morality and ethics, and they forget Islamic values.
[21] Malcolm X (1925–65) was a civil rights Muslim activist (Ellis & Smith, 2010).

Further, the empirical material refers to the fact that the Muslims feel that Western culture perceives them as inferior, as Said pointed out in *Orientalism* (2003). Porang Zahedi (2009) writes, in the context of the minaret ban in Switzerland and how this affects Muslims, 'We Muslims feel unwelcome in the West' (islamguiden.se).

It is frequently remarked in the Swedish media that Muslims and Islam are associated with oppression of women, violence and honour killing. Salaam (2011) for example, starts his article by writing: 'In the West, it is seldom that honour killing is discussed separately from Islam' (ummahobserver.com).

The *second reason* is that these liberal values have no roots in Islamic values, particularly in the *sharia*, and this corresponds to Habermas' (2011) claim that religion draws its legitimacy from its own roots. Salaam (2010) encourages Muslims to refrain from voting because they cannot influence the results of Swedish parliament elections and Swedish democracy is not rooted in the *sharia*. He writes that 'democracy has no basis in the *sharia*, and that 'the problem with voting in a democracy is that, in a democracy, people decide what is *halal* and *haram*, while in Islam, we condemn this and commit to God' (ummahobserver.com).

Concerning exclusion and inclusion of Swedish norms, this discourse aims to exclude non-Muslims by, for example, actions and dress (Ismail, 2008). Muslims in this public sphere present Western society in a negative way — as immoral, dirty and sinful, for example (Ramadan, 1999). Western societies are often associated with alcohol and exploitation of women's bodies. Mariam Svensson (2009) refers to scientific facts about alcohol, the number of alcohol victims in Sweden and how alcohol may affect society. She uses her own experience as a doctor to describe what drinkers the troubles they meet in everyday life. This discourse closes as follows: 'We Muslims are proud that we do not drink alcohol' (islamguiden.se).

Regarding dress, the empirical material shows that the appearance of women and men alike is very important to Muslim identity. Muslims relate appearance to beauty and virtue. For example, Jenni A. (2010) writes: 'We have to wear the veil. It's important. And men with beards and modest clothing are handsome' (islamguiden.se).

Nevertheless, the aim of the discourse is to achieve the common good, *al-maslaha al-amma* (Fraser, 1990; Ramadan, 1999), only for the Muslim community in Swedish society. Salaam (2010) writes: 'Do something good to help the Muslim *Ummah* in Sweden*'* (ummahobserver.com)*.

The common good may be achieved only by following and applying the rules of Islam (Ramadan, 1999), and establishing of a homogeneous and coherent religious discourse, in order to retain the Islamic collective identity in this public sphere.

Shi'ite Muslim public sphere in Swedish society

This Shi'ite distinctive Islamic public sphere is created as a satellite public sphere (Squires, 2002), like the distinctive Sunni Muslim one, as a religious alternative to the Swedish central public sphere, which is secular. In fact, this public sphere addresses the Muslim community in Sweden, particularly Shi'ite Muslims, in order to fulfil two functions.

The *first* is to create an Islamic moral collective identity (Haider, 2008), and this identity is formulated, discursively, in form of the 'We' against the 'Others' who are non-Muslims. 'Devotion' (2009) describes herself as Muslim, she writes: 'I am a Muslim girl' (minhijab.se). 'Concerning the "Others" who are non-Muslims, there is no clear sign of other Muslims being excluded.'

The *second function* is to maintain Islamic ethical norms and values, in order to encourage Muslims to follow the path that leads to the moral life, and this corresponds to Haider's (2008) claim about Shi'ite Muslims' duty of self-development. This may occur by a process of exclusion and inclusion of the Swedish dominant norms and values.

There is ambivalence towards dominant Swedish values. For example, there is no contradiction between liberal political Swedish values and the Shi'ite ones, such as freedom of religion or democracy (Haider, 2008). One person calls himself 'Swedish Muslim' (2005) writes about pluralism, encouraging Muslims to coexist with one another in peace: 'one is afraid of differences, although that is what enriches us as people' (noorislam.net).

However, there is exclusion of some liberal values, as by other conservative religious groups, particularly with regard to certain ethical issues like homosexuality and abortion. Abdul Razek (2005) writes about abortion, which is prohibited in Islam: 'In Islam, human life starts at the embryo stage. Since a person's right to life begins at the same time, abortion is prohibited unless the pregnancy endangers the mother's life' (noorislam.net).

Shi'ite Muslims attempt to link Islamic values with dominant Swedish liberal values by including them in their Islamic discourse in the national context — acknowledging children's rights, equality and freedom of religion, for example. This is confirmed by Soysal (1997) concerning national civic and universal values, such as religious liberty. Moreover, some liberal values are demanded by Shi'ites for living as a minority in non-religious societies; this is, at any rate, asserted by Haider (2008). Peter Fröberg (2005) tries to justify disqualification of polygamy by portraying it as abnormal, stating that 'most countries have abolished or restricted the right to polygamy' (noorislam.net). Razek (2005) writes about children's rights in Islam that 'the child should be treated with kindness and not be beaten or treated roughly' and that 'they have the right to learn to swim, ride, read and write' (noorislam.net). Thus, there is relative compatibility between the Shi'ite Muslim values and Swedish one.

Concerning the exclusion and inclusion of Swedish norms, Shi'ite Muslims have distanced themselves from the dominant Swedish norms of conduct and dress. This fact corresponds with Islamic ethical theory (Haider, 2008), and has been confirmed by the empirical material. Hence,

one of these Shi'ite Muslim duties is to follow a dichotomy of gender, through strict physical separation between man and woman. For example, women should not shake hands with strange men, except one who is brother, father or husband. One anonymous[23] (2010a) Muslim writes in an e-magazine: 'Islam calls on us to stay within the limits in our contacts with the opposite sex' (minhijab.nu). Another anonymous (2010b): contributor quotes from his or her own poem: 'the man and woman relationship…is like an explosion…whenever it may have its function…love sparks can create a detonation' (minhijab.nu).

Regarding dress, Shi'ite Muslim women are obliged to wear the hijab to protect themselves from the society around them. This is because women may be treated as objects of lust by men and commercial companies, which exploit them as a commodity. In an e-magazine interview, Amal (2010) describes the hijab as 'safe, because no strangers look at me with lust. It protects me from the oppression of women in the society we live in today, which treats women as objects, in advertising for example' (minhijab.nu). At the same time, wearing the hijab is regarded as virtuous because it is connected with purity and beauty. She adds that it represents 'innocence, purity, holiness, sacred and respect, etc' (minhijab.nu).

The order of this discourse is to encourage Muslims to follow the path that leads to the moral life, which may lead to achieving a rational advantage and benefit for the group and society or, in Haider's (2008) terminology, 'the good', which is comparable to the 'common good' referred to by Fraser (1999). One anonymous Muslim (2005c) writes: 'The natural and necessary option for Muslims should be to rediscover the essence of morality or the good behaviour of the oath, to the benefit of both themselves and the society we now live in' (noorislam).

As this analysis reveals, the distinctive Shi'ite Islamic public sphere was created in reaction to oppression with reference to the dominant Swedish norms only, and particularly oppression of Muslim women. We may also observe that most of the dominant Swedish values are included in the Shi'ite sphere. However, the distinctive Sunni public sphere was created in reaction to oppression arising from the dominant Swedish norms and values. The difference between these two distinctive public spheres is that, while the Shi'ite one was created as ethical response, the Sunni one was created as a political, as well as an ethical response.

Muslim and Swedish community context

Open Islamic public sphere in Swedish society

The open Islamic public sphere was created as a counterpublic sphere (Squires, 2002) and as a supplement to the central Swedish one, instead of as an alternative in the first and second distinctive Islamic public spheres. Undoubtedly, this Islamic public sphere addresses the Muslim

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[23] See Anonym in the reference list.

community in Sweden, in particular (regardless of whether its members are Sunni or Shi'ite), as well as the Swedish community in general. I call this public sphere 'open' because many non-Muslims participate in this public sphere. For example, a non-Muslim guest[24] (2010) wishing to know about Muslim tradition regarding funerals asks: 'Can one choose a traditional Muslim funeral, even if one is not a fully practising Muslim?' (svenskmuslim.se). Moreover, articles obtained from the central Swedish public sphere may be found, at muslimskaperspektiv.blogspot.com for example, and this what Squires (2002) asserts when he talks about increasing public communication between this counterpublic sphere and the dominant one. This open Islamic public sphere aims to fulfil two functions.

The *first* is to uphold an Islamic collective identity in the national Swedish context by constructing a united Swedish– Islamic collective identity. This may be compared with Ramadan's third characteristic of Muslim collective identity in relation to the European context and Svanberg & Westerlund's (1999) description of 'blue-yellow Islam'. In fact, the forum from which empirical material is obtained is called the 'Swedish Muslim Forum', which makes sense of having an Islamic, as well a Swedish identity. In the same forum, 'Frida' (2009) writes about Islam in the Swedish media and brings up the question of whether Swedish Muslims should participate in the Swedish media: 'Now many Swedish do not know anything about Islam, although there are several thousand Swedish Muslims' (svenskmuslim.se), with the emphasis on the number of Swedish Muslims.

The *second* function is to present Islam as compatible with most of the dominant Swedish norms and values, such as democracy and human rights, through two mechanisms: 1) combining and redefining these norms and values from an Islamic point of view, as long as they are in accordance with Islam, and 2) clarifying misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Islam; defending Islam against distortion; and correcting this distorted image of Islam in the Swedish media, for example by combating Islamophobia. Thus, these two mechanisms take place by means of a given discourse and a process of inclusion and exclusion of norms and values of the 'Other', which are explained as follows.

The discourse includes most of the dominant Swedish values, as long as they are in accordance with Islamic values (democracy and integration, for example), as Ramadan asserts (1999, 2004). Yusuf (2011) writes of democracy in the Arab world and how this democracy should be supported by the West: 'The West should support the development of democracy in the Arab world because it benefits everyone' (muslimskaperspektiv.blogspot.com). In another case, Yusuf (2010) defined Muslim women's right to wear the *niqab*[25] in terms of human rights. In discussing a debate article that was published in the Swedish media, he asks: 'How does Sarkozy preserve women's rights by banning something that should be a human right — choosing their own clothes?' (muslimskaperspektiv.blogspot.com). At the same time, applying Squires' (2002)

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[24] See 'Guest' in the reference list.
[25] The *niqab* covers the whole face.

theory about the counterpublic sphere, one may remark that Yusuf and many Muslims who discuss debate articles published in the central Swedish public sphere want to test arguments and strategies among the wider public, by using persuasive tactics. In the Swedish Muslim Forum, 'Gullan' (2008) writes of her wish for an abortion because her boyfriend was unfaithful with other girls. She writes: 'I do not want to have children with such a man. I want the child aborted. I know that Islam does not allow it, but I want to have an abortion and get rid of that bastard'. Aalyiah answers her on the same page: 'You know that abortion is *haram*' (svenskamuslim.se). Thus, there is ambivalence towards Swedish liberal values; for example, some liberal values, such as abortion or homosexuality, are excluded.

Concerning the inclusion and exclusion of norms, this Islamic discourse includes parts of non-practising Muslim and dominant Swedish norms. For example, there is a discussion in the Swedish Muslim Forum about what was happened on *Halal-TV*, when two of the presenters refused to shake hands with a man. The writers agree that there is nothing in the Quran to say that women should not shake hands with men, and others write that shaking hands with men is a minor issue, and people have to integrate with Swedish norms. However, some writers believe this is *haram*. 'Ida'(2008) takes a position between these two arguments, writing: 'It is OK to shake hands with an old man or a little boy' (svenskamuslim.se).

In addition, some liberal political norms are included. For example, Muslims are encouraged to participate in the election. 'Fredsagent' (2009) remind and encourage members and readers, in the forum, to vote in the European parliamentary election. He says: 'As you know, the European parliamentary election is today, 7 June. I'm going to vote, and I really urge the rest of you to do so too' (svenskmuslim.se).

Thus, there is ambivalence about dominant Swedish liberal norms and values. The relatively liberal order of the discourse in this open Islamic public sphere is to achieve the common good for Swedish Muslims, as well as other Swedes (Ramadan, 1999 & Fraser, 1990). Muslims can be encouraged to integrate into mainstream Swedish society, and adapt to most of the dominant Swedish norms and values, without losing their religious identity as Muslims.

As we see in this analysis and typology, this counterpublic sphere is created as a supplement to the Swedish one, unlike the two previous distinctive public spheres. It is created as a result of increased public communication with the dominant sphere, and represents dominant conceptions and group interests, as discussed by Squires (2002).

Swedish community context

Muslims' participation in the central Swedish public sphere

The empirical material shows that Muslims' participation in the central Swedish public sphere plays an important, if not crucial, role in the self-presentation of Islam and Muslims in Sweden. Some of them have particular religious affiliations and/or belong to specific religious associations. They address Swedes in general, regardless of ethnicity, religion or culture, and have two aims.

The *first* is to combat Islamophobia by clarifying misunderstandings and misrepresentations of Islam, defending Islam against distortion and correcting the distorted image of Islam in Swedish media. This supports Squires' (2002) assertion that Muslims encouraged to participate in broad public forums by discussing and sharing opinions in the mass media. These Muslims claim that a negative image of Islam has been conveyed by the media. This corresponds to Said's (2003) assertion in *Orientalism*. As Omar Mustafa[26] (2011) writes, 'For us Swedish Muslims, it does not really matter what we say or what we do because we are constantly judged in advance' (newsmill.se).

The *second* is to present Islam as compatible with most of the dominant Swedish norms and values, such as democracy and religious freedom, by combining and redefining these norms and values from an Islamic point of view, as far as possible; see Ramadan's (1999) description of the third Islamic identity. In this case, one way for Muslims to participate is to be visible in the Swedish media. As we have seen, the primary intention of the *Halal-TV* programme, presented by three veiled young Muslim women, was to convey a positive image of Islam and Muslims, particularly Muslim women. One presenter says:

'We do not want to make the viewers convert to Islam, but we want to deliver a positive image of three believing Muslim women who have various opinions on different issues and they can be independent and active by working'[27]

Secondly, to convey a message that there are several different Islamic views and perspectives concerning social issues, one presenter says: 'We want to say that we have different views about one phenomenon, even though we are Muslims.'[28]

Thus, the self-presentation takes place as a given discourse, which depends on a certain process of inclusion and exclusion of different types of norms and values.

Muslims have two ways to construct a discourse in their self-presentation. The *first way* is that by attempting to align themselves to dominant Swedish values, embracing most of them (especially the political ones), as long as they are in accordance with Islamic values. Dalia Kassem[29] defends her wearing of the veil in terms of individual freedom, rather than of religious

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[26] Omar Mustafa is Chairman of the Islamic League in Sweden.
[27] '*After Halal-TV*' programme, 22 December 2008.
[28] 'Good Evening' (*Go kväll*) programme, 29 October 2008.
[29] Dalia Kassem is one of the main characters in SVT's documentary, *Halal-TV*.

duty, as other Muslim women do. She criticises a well-known writer, Dilsa Demirbag Stcen[30]. This may be compared to the declaration of the Great Mosque in Paris concerning the ban on the veil in French schools, Soysal (1997). Kassem (2008) writes:

'Why would she deprive me of my freedom? My freedom is to dress as I want and live as I want and even to speak up. Why should she have the freedom and not me? We all live in Sweden, hello? What democratic ideas does Dilsa have really?' (newsmill.com).

However, there is ambivalence toward some liberal values because Muslims, just like other religious groups, have conservative values concerning some issues, such as homosexuality, the role of the women in society and abortion. There is therefore exclusion of some Swedish liberal values. In *Halal-TV*, for example, the presenters agree that women should not have sex before they get married. One presenter says that 'sex is nice, but not before marriage'[31], and in another episode a guest states that 'men and women are different but they are equal.[32]

Muslims' *second way* of constructing a discourse is to distance themselves from all forms of violence and extremism. 'Mustafa' (2011) writes that 'visitors and management of the mosque sharply rejected all forms of violence and terror' (newsmill.se) and Muhammad Amin Kharraki[33] (2011) writes; 'I am against all forms of extremism (dn.se).

Obviously, Muslims do not have a homogeneous discourse of the dominant Swedish norms, because these Muslims have several different views and interpretations about one issue, for example, two of the three presenters of *Halal-TV* refused to shake hands with one interviewer, who was very angry about this. He told them: 'If you don't want to shake hands with strangers you should go to Iran. You have to adapt to Swedish norms.' A presenter replied: 'We were born in Sweden, and we act and dress as we want, because no one has control over us.'[34] Kassem (2008) defends this act in terms of religious freedom in Sweden, and claims that there is something called freedom of religion, freedom of expression and democracy in Sweden (newsmill.se). In another case, two presenters distanced themselves from the idea of wearing the *niqab*.[35]

Ii is clear that there is agreement among these three programme presenters concerning some norms. For example, they condemn the act of drinking alcohol, connecting it with the harmful effects of alcohol in society.[36]

The order of the discourse that occurs in the Swedish central public sphere is achieving a common good in Swedish society (Ramadan, 1999 & Fraser, 1990). The 'common good', in this

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[30] Steen is known as a liberal journalist who focuses on individual rights (newsmill.se).
[31] *Halal-TV*, 6 November 2008.
[32] *Halal-TV*, 3 November 2008.
[33] Mohammed Amin Kharraki is the chairman of Sweden's Young Muslims.
[34] *Halal-TV*, 3 November 2008.
[35] *Halal-TV*, 17 November 2008.
[36] *Halal-TV*, 24 November 2008.

sense, is not only for the Muslim community but rather for the whole of Swedish society. Hani Abdulkadir[37] (2010) writes: 'It is important that we do not let ourselves be led by fear, but try to be balanced in order to constructively strengthen our society together' (souse.se).

Indeed, Muslims attempt to find a middle way between their faith and Swedish norms and values. Another presenter says on *Halal-TV*: 'We try to find a middle ways in order to adapt to Swedish norms and values. For example, we do not need to be feminists to defend women's issues.'[38]

The process of this discourse is, *first*, to exclude extremists. For example, the presenters of *Halal-TV* visit a church, as a signal that they have no problem with non-Muslims.[39] It agrees with Squires' (2002) theory about marginable groups who communicate the dominant public sphere in order to seek solidarity and alliance with other groups. *Second,* this discourse is connected with the Swedish national discourse, and Muslims regard themselves as a part of Swedish society. For example, the presenters of *Halal-TV* repeat the phrase 'we as Swedes' and dress in blue and yellow clothing to indicate that they are Swedish Muslims[40]; see Svanberg & Westerlund (1999) on 'blue-yellow Islam'.

Obviously, the presenters would like to convey that Muslims are a *normal* religious group like other groups in Sweden, and that there is no pure Swedish culture and people in the Swedish society. This statement may be related to Habermas' (2006) ideas about religious people's participation in the secular public sphere and how they are obliged to achieve a balance between their religious and secular convictions. We can refer to Roy (2007) also when he talks about Muslims who could adapt to secularism by developing certain practices and compromises.

Three perceptions

Analysis of the empirical material shows that there are *three different perceptions* of, and approaches to, dominant Swedish norms and values among Muslims. The research questions are answered separately for each perception and the three are then compared.

The *first perception* is of Swedish society as *completely different*, in its dominant liberal norms and values, from the Muslim community. Swedish values are excluded because they are Western; they are perceived as an outcome of colonialism; and they have no roots in Islamic values, particularly in the *sharia*. Swedish norms are perceived as immoral, dirty and sinful,

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[37] Hani Abdulkadir is the chairman of the Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice.
[38] *Halal-TV*, 3 November 2008.
[39] *Halal-TV*, 15 November 2008.
[40] *Halal-TV*, 15 November 2008.

because they are often related to alcohol, crime and exploitation of women's bodies. Muslims with this perception believe that there is no compatibility between Islamic and dominant Swedish norms and values. Consequently, they attempt to establish a homogeneous religious discourse that is coherent and consistent with the need to confirm the identity of the *Ummah.* This discourse is created in a distinctive Sunni Islamic public sphere, as an alternative to the liberal and secular discourses in the Swedish central public sphere. This self-presentation of Islam and Muslims applies only to certain Sunni Muslims, in particular the *salafi*, in the Muslim community in Sweden, where Muslims are encouraged to implement Islamic rules.

In the *second perception*, *Swedish society is fragmented* and separate in its dominant norms and values. According to Shi'ite Muslims with this perception, there is a distinction between norms on the one hand and values on the other. In fact, there is ambivalence towards Swedish values. For example, there is no contradiction between most Swedish liberal political values and those of the Shi'ites, but there is an exclusion of some liberal values, such as acceptance of homosexuality and abortion. In the case of Swedish norms, Shi'ite Muslims believe that Swedish society is corrupt and oppressive in its norms, particularly concerning women. The analysis therefore shows that Shi'ite Muslims have established their own separate Islamic public sphere far removed from, and constituting an alternative to, the central Swedish central sphere. The former sphere aims to uphold practical Islamic ethical duties and self-restraint, in order to retain Muslim moral identity. At the same time, this Shi'ite Muslim public sphere contains almost all the dominant Swedish dominant liberal values, which are in accordance with Islam.

In the *third perception*, Swedish society is diverse and multicultural, comprising numerous groups including the Muslim community. Unlike the first and second perceptions, the third regards most dominant Swedish norms and values as supplementing those of Islam, in order to help Muslims to engage in an integration process and construct a single Swedish Muslim identity. This approach is expressed by Muslims who belong to the various Swedish Islamic organisations, in particular Sunni Muslims (except *salafi*) in the open Islamic public sphere, as well as those who participate in the central Swedish public sphere. In fact, there is ambivalence towards the dominant Swedish norms and values in this approach. The Muslim participants' discourse includes most of the dominant Swedish liberal norms and values, as long as these norms and values are in accordance with Islam. Hence, there is an exception to, and exclusion of, some liberal norms and values because these Muslims have their own Islamic starting point for discussing social issues, such as homosexuality and alcohol abuse.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The answers to the research questions show that the first perception provides Sunni Muslims, particularly, *salafi*, with an alternative religious discourse comprising Islamic norms and values in a distinctive public sphere. Here, our main concern is how we regard the encounter between

the latter and the dominant Swedish norms and values, and how we can resolve the tension between religious and secular norms and values in Muslims' everyday life. This is a huge challenge for Muslims and secular society alike. Not believing in dominant Swedish norms and values like democracy and integration means that, in terms of Taylor's (as citied by Asad, 2003) theory, Muslims with this perception have no political ethics, independent from their religious faith, in common. On this premise, three issues may be discussed.

The *first issue* concerns the discussion process in the distinctive Islamic public spheres, particularly with the first perception. Muslims with this perception deal with and discuss different social issues in Islamic terms, arguing that any point of view should be based on the religious texts that only scholars, who are authorised to interpret the sacred Islamic texts, can interpret (Ramadan, 2004). These interpretations are conveyed to Muslims in the form of *fatwas* or specific recommendations. Consequently, this discussion and the convictions expressed in it draw on religious texts as a starting point, instead of the discussion process. Thus, the authority of sacred religious texts dominates this discussion, and undoubtedly erodes the scope for debate since Muslims claim that these texts are the actual words of God. Nevertheless, this dilemma concerns not only Muslims but any group in society that has, and uses as a starting point, its own sacred religious texts or ideology; the Christian Democrats in Sweden are an example. Muslims with the first perception do not, however, have the same political ethics as other groups, such as the Christian Democrats.

The *second issue* is the *sharia* and its practical implementation. Muslims are urged to follow the rules of the Islamic *sharia*, but the form of the *sharia* to be applied is not specified. There are different versions of the *sharia*, based on varying interpretations of the Quran and Sunna, as a sources of the *sharia*, in several different schools of thought (Ramadan, 2004 and Roy, 2007). Thus, there is no clear vision concerning the *sharia* in the Muslim world in general and Sunni Muslim groups in particular. The question is which version of the *sharia* should be applied, where and how? The *sharia* as a system of Islamic rules is only an ideal and cannot be applied in reality, as Roy (2007) points out. As results in the analysis show, the second and third perceptions have no problem concerning the *sharia* because Muslims with both perceptions convey divergent interpretations and understandings of Islam, particularly in the *Halal-TV* programme.

The *third issue* is a normative question concerning integration as an ideal and the process of this integration in practice. In fact, Swedish society is multicultural, and this implies an assumption that an intrinsic connection between religion and culture exists. Religion remains embedded in a given stable cultural background, as Roy (2007) claims. However, the problem is that religious groups, particularly fundamentalist ones, have decoupled themselves from cultural references. This has challenged the process of integration and may lead to disintegration and failure of the multicultural project in Sweden. In the first perception, Islam is regarded as a religion that is universal and global, subject to a conception of the *Ummah*, and reaches beyond specific cultures.

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This study focuses on Muslim participations as a study group. Future research may address the same questions that are raised in this study but assign to the group studied, instead, members of various Muslim organisations or Muslims who do not necessarily participate in public discussions. The new knowledge then produced may help to elucidate, for example, issues of Muslim integration in Sweden. It may then be possible to explore generation, gender and socioeconomic differences among Muslims in this study group.

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