

# Public authorities speak about immigrants

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## Abstract

In this article the discourse of immigrants at different authorities is studied. I have collected data from different authorities, the police authorities, the employment office, the social welfare service and the social insurance office in a medium-sized municipality in Sweden. Persons, who in their working as professionals meet immigrants, have answered an inquiry about feelings and thoughts about their meetings. With the data from these inquiries as a starting point I have been able to identify and characterise two separate cultures of authorities, or ideal types. These have been labelled open and closed authority.

The officials at the open authority say that they to some extent have sufficient qualifications, but they are aware of that they need much more to be able to meet immigrants in a proper way. The officials all affirm multiplicity and think that society should create possibilities for immigrants to keep their religion, language and culture. They also show awareness of existing discrimination. That everybody should be treated equally means that everybody should be treated with respect and empathy based on individual needs. The authority has developed work methods and has professionals that have a high competence within the field to consult.

The officials at the closed authority think that it is enough with their own culture as a starting point. The view of immigrants is impressed by a monocultural attitude. Exclusion or assimilation of immigrants is demanded. An exotic view of other cultures and depreciation of immigrants is also found here. At the closed authority the respondents think the feeling of discrimination is mistaken and that the immigrants are whining for nothing. The closed authority is impressed by monocultural work methods. Everyone should be treated equally, and as Swedes. The clients are expected to have the same experiences and frames of reference as the Swedish officials.

**Key words:** Immigrants reception, open authorities, closed authorities, officials' awareness level, monocultural work methods.

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## • Background

The choice of problems is motivated by that both international and Swedish research on immigrants' situation at the labour market and in society in general, has shown that there are great shortcomings in integration (e.g. Lange, 2000; Altonji & Blank, 1999).

Loury (2002) makes a distinction between discrimination in contract and contact respectively. Discrimination in contract would mean an unequal treatment based on ethnicity at formal meetings like for instance, recruiting, while discrimination in contact deals with everyday meetings in the private realm of life. In an investigation on new immigrants' meetings with Swedish society, everyday meetings between minority and majority were studied (Elmeroth, 2002). A clear picture of the alienation came forward and could be defined as discrimination in contact. This study will focus on discrimination in contract.

Also at the authorities' formal meetings it is the attitude of the specific official that decides the discrimination in contract. The concept of everyday racism can be used to describe everyday situations that are characterised by the official seeing persons with foreign background as inferior because of their ethnic belonging. Everyday racism can be understood as a process with individuals as active participants in the survival of racism as a social ideology. This type of racism hereby becomes a part of the whole social system. Essed (1991) writes that individuals' everyday racism should be interpreted as an expression of how racism is an ideology that manifests itself in all parts of society. Everyday racism is

about racism that is reproduced in everyday routines in a, by the participants, way taken for granted. The function of the concept is to show the dominance of one group over another in everyday life.

Essed has also developed theories on everyday racism, where the concepts of institutional and individual racism are defined. The concept of institutional racism focuses on the social institutions and their structures, and how racism is a part of the rules that shape and reproduce these structures. The power of the individual racism in the creation of racism in society is underestimated. Essed's concept of individual racism is problematic in this context because it places the individual outside the institutional and social systems and structures, despite the fact that it is the individuals and relations within the authorities that create and maintain the everyday racism.

Even ethnic groups that contribute to the socioeconomic development in their country are looked upon as subordinate groups by the inhabitants of the hosting country (Eaton, 1998). Eaton further writes that discrimination increases and that many societies with immigrants have ended up in a difficult situation. The authorities in Sweden are required to strive to an increase in multiplicity and integration of ethnic minorities. The authorities' inadequacy in meetings with minorities can possibly be explained by an ethnocentric understanding of the functions of the society and the family. In places with little immigration there is no one within the authority that specifically works with ethnic minorities and has special training for this work. The unfamiliarity with minorities impresses the meetings with ignorance and insecurity.

In monocultural societies, ethnic minorities are often looked upon as "non-belonging". Pettigrew (1998) identifies four main reactions against the new minorities, namely prejudice, discrimination, political protests and violence. Included in the monocultural pattern is also a stereotyping of the non-belonging. Hall (1997) says that we through stereotypes construct social categories of the "normal" and the "divergent", who belong and who do not. Osman (1999) writes that these internalised ideas about cultural similarity and peculiarity respectively become identity founding criteria and frame of reference in the meeting between Swedish born people and immigrants. Osman as well as Tesfahuney (1998) emphasize the importance of this discourse to the social construction of "the others" as well as to the categorisation of immigrants as strangers.

Constructions come from a lack of balance in power between the groups that shape society. This ethnocentric attitude means that one's own culture is central and the world around is judged according to one's own position and experiences. One's own culture is consequently regarded as universal and its values are thought to be true.

Pettigrew (1998) thinks that sociological research can understand and explain the relations between different groups. In association to this, I think that the pedagogical research can give a deeper understanding of the structural mechanisms that affect the meeting between authority and minority.

In my thesis which brings up the school situation of pupils with both parents born abroad (Elmeroth, 1997), I show how these pupils are discriminated against in a way that produce negative effects on their continuous schooling. A later study also points to the same discrimination in school (2001).

Further research of my own, which sheds light on illiterate immigrants' (Elmeroth, 2003) and labour immigrant doctors' (Torpsten & Elmeroth, 2002) contacts with Swedish society, shows that both lowly and highly educated immigrants experience discrimination in the meeting with society. Experienced discrimination also affects the immigrants' confidence in the authorities. In a study on Finnish conditions Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) showed that the more discrimination and racism the immigrants met, the less confidence they had in the authorities.

- Purpose and method

The aim of the research reported in this paper was to analyse and define concepts in structural mechanisms and conceptions that can form the grounds for marginalization, racism and xenophobia in authorities' meetings with immigrants. By this quantitative approach it has been possible to study correlations and make factor analyses to create patterns of interpretation from the collected data in order to map out different ways for the authorities to meet immigrants. The focus of the investigation is persons

in authorities within the police authorities, the employment office, the social welfare service and the social insurance office. In the spring of 2003, 200 officials answered enquiries.

The investigation was made outside the area of the big cities, in a municipality where the share of immigrants amounts to approximately ten percent. This choice is justified due to the fact that the majority of studies on integration in society is located in geographical areas where the share of immigrants is great and where there is experience of meetings with ethnic minorities. In smaller towns there are both demands for and possibilities to use different strategies at the same time as special solutions will be economically untenable.

With the purpose of studying how competence for work in a multicultural business is defined, questions were asked with regards to how sufficient the respondents experience their own qualifications and also to their education in the field. Questions about the education dealt partly with the direction of the tertiary education, partly with time for different elements and for in service education within the field. Inquiries were also made about the quality of the education in terms of how well it prepared for multicultural work.

To further study the discourse on immigration, immigrants and minorities 30 statements were presented for the respondents to consider. The statements consisted of views that occur to various degrees among people. These statements are developed by Lange and Westin (1997) and have previously been used in several of their studies.

One question with 15 statements aimed at studying the respondents' view on their own authority's work with persons with foreign backgrounds. The statements presented are based on views about different authorities' work as seen in the mass media, in research and in other contexts.

Further questions about the authorities' work in the multicultural business dealt with whether the place of work has developed some work methods that are specially adjusted to work with persons with foreign backgrounds or Swedish minority backgrounds. From the places of work where developed work methods within this field exist, there is information on how this works.

The quantitative data, which could be collected from the answers in the inquiry, were coded and entered in a statistics program, SPSS. The answer alternatives were given numerical values. After this coding frequencies and percentages were calculated. Factor analyses, with the questions/statements that belong to the same question area, were made to study if any statements can be the basis for determination of concepts.

After the factor analyses had been computed, composite scores were created through calculations of means of the answers to the statements that create the factor. To be able to compare groups with different backgrounds analyses of variance were computed. The data on a nominal or ordinal scale level were analysed with the help of chi square tests.

In each area of the questions the respondents were asked to comment in order to explain the chosen alternative. The comments that add new dimensions and a deeper understanding of the pattern of answers have been quoted in the article. These quotes are sorted and categorized and therefore they form a basis for the interpretation of the qualitative data.

### *1. Discussion on the structure of the inquiry*

Attempts to study racism present some difficulties. To investigate what people are thinking may be considered an impossible task, at least for the researcher who is not a thought-reader. When choosing the instruments for the present investigation, the demand for anonymity is important to take into consideration. An investigation in the form of inquiries makes it possible for the researcher to satisfy this demand. Inquiries have further advantages because connections and meaning in the answers of the different respondents can be brought together with the help of statistical methods and present a pattern, which in a clear way shows the experiences and opinions of the respondents.

When constructing inquiries you face difficulties as a researcher. The questions should be unambiguous, reliable, valid etc. When it comes to asking about the attitudes towards other people or different groups in

society, the difficulties are even greater. It is almost impossible to avoid an "us-and-them"-thinking. This was also discussed in detail during the planning of the inquiry. To see people as representatives of a special group is of course not a good solution. The research on ethnicity as well as the research on gender meets the same type of problems. May/can you talk about immigrants and Swedes? May/can you talk about women and men? In my thesis (Elmeroth, 1997) about the school situation for pupils with both parents born abroad, I chose the title "All equal – all different", to emphasize that it is impossible to put a sign of equality between the group and the individual. Despite these reservations I undertook to try and map out the officials' opinions on and understandings about multicultural work, in other words understandings about the work with "the others".

When the work with the data analysis started I found that most had answered the questions in a way that is connected and may be described as reliable. There is however a relatively great rate of internal loss on certain questions. Furthermore the answer alternative "do not know" has been chosen by a great number of respondents on certain questions. A comparison with other similar investigations shows that there is a considerably greater number of "do not know" in this investigation. In other words, there are many participants who have not taken a stand or do not want to display their standpoint. Possibly it can be feared that this aversion to answering can be connected with a feeling of not being anonymous and/or with a hostile attitude toward the multicultural society.

There has been a coordinator of the inquiries in every authority. Some of the coordinators' comments have been passed on from persons who have not wanted to answer the inquiry. In these comments opinions like the following come up:

"You can't have any opinions you like."

"This violates the personal integrity."

That these feelings exist despite the total anonymity of the inquiry is of course troublesome. Similar opinions are very common in xenophobic circles, even though they cannot be taken as evidence of xenophobia or racism.

## • Results

The result deals with four themes or aspects of the public authorities meeting with immigrants. The *Qualification for multicultural work* is studied with both closed- and open-ended questions about the respondents experience and qualification. Two paragraphs *Attitude toward immigrants* and *Judgment of the authority's meeting with immigrants* aim to create concepts and find patterns that stick together and give meaning to how different ways to think about immigrants interact. The paragraph *The authority's work methods* ends the report of the results.

### ***1. Qualification for multicultural work***

The feeling of having sufficient qualifications to meet persons with a different background is at great length controlled by experiences from work with immigrants and the life experiences the respondents have. Also personal interest, private contacts with immigrants and a liberal view on humanity affect the attitude toward their own qualifications in the meeting with people with a background different from their own.

Some respondents show a personal interest in foreign cultures. By reading, being open to information and discussions these think that the qualifications are sufficient to some extent. A strategy to learn more is to be curious in the meetings with other cultures:

"When I meet non-Nordic people I try to find out as much as possible about their way of life. Try to be humble. Try to familiarize"

Another respondent writes about contacts with immigrants, but this time with "friends of my own children". This respondent also writes that:

"The knowledge you have about other cultures is from TV mass media."

The education of the respondents is very important for the experience of a high degree of qualification. It is mainly the younger people and professionals that often meet people with foreign background, that have any education at all within the field. Even for these groups however the education is too deficient. Especially great is the need for knowledge in matters of meeting people with traumatic experiences. A majority of the respondents have not participated in any education in that field.

There are also differences between age groups when it comes to how well prepared they think they are for multicultural work. While the youngest group has had a better education within the field, the older group thinks to a large extent that the education did not prepare them at all for this work.

Several respondents commented that experience is the only support they have. There are consistently great shortcomings concerning education. This is also expressed by the respondents who search for knowledge and education.

"I do my best but sometimes feel that I am lacking knowledge."

The respondents search for education and one thinks that the need for further education in the field is urgent. The competence is experienced as "not satisfactory" for meetings with people from different cultures and one respondent writes:

"Very difficult when you do not have the competence and knowledge necessary."

The education has consequently not prepared the respondents for work in a multicultural society and less than ten percent think they have been well prepared. The existing in service education consists of guidance, seminars and conferences and is considered insufficient.

However, there are some respondents, who think that they don't need any knowledge or special qualifications. They feel that their "life experience" is sufficient although they only know about the Swedish culture. They are not aware of the shortage of their own qualifications or the need for knowledge, because they think that it is best to treat everyone as if they were Swedish.

## 2. Attitude toward immigrants

The respondents' attitudes toward immigrants can be classified into seven different factors. In the text below the factors and the questions which load in the factor are shown. Each factor is also presented with the correlations between the questions and the strength of the factor loading.

Three themes, with the designations *Multiplicity will be preserved*, *Society will protect multiplicity* and *Multiplicity enriches*, comprise a positive attitude toward a multicultural society.

Statements which load in the factor *Multiplicity will be preserved*

- A. The immigrants' children have to get education in their first language.
- B. It's good if immigrants in Sweden preserve their first language and teach it to their children.
- C. It's OK with me if my son or daughter marry and have children with a black person.
- D. Discrimination of immigrants is a big problem in Sweden.
- E. Muslim girls/women should be able to wear veil in school or at work if they want to.

In the table below the correlations and the factor loadings for each question in the factor are shown.

Table 1. Multiplicity will be preserved

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	E	Factor loadings
A education first language						.51
B preserve first language	.39***					.39
C marry black person	.20*	.35***				.44
D discrimination big problem	.31***	.33***	.31***			.43
E muslim wear veil	.40***	.44***	.36***	.37***		.62

A majority of the respondents agree with the factor *Multiplicity will be preserved* and think that society should create possibilities for immigrants, who so wish, to preserve their language and their cultural

traditions.

Statements which load in the factor *Society will protect multiplicity*

- A. It goes without saying that there should be mosques in Sweden.
- B. Society ought to create opportunities for immigrants, who so wish, to preserve their language and cultural traditions.
- C. The Swedes have to accept that not all immigrants in Sweden share the fundamental values that characterise Swedish society.
- D. The Swedish immigrant and refugee policy has to be more liberal than it is today.

Table 2. Society will protect multiplicity

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	Factor loadings
A should be mosques in Sweden					.74
B opportunities to preserve language and culture	.43***				.48
C not all share fundamental values	.32***	.36***			.33
D refugee policy more liberal	.34***	.33***	.31***		.35

The agreement in the factor *Society will protect multiplicity* means that the multiplicity is understood as an asset that is important to preserve in the society. Approximately 65 percent of the respondents agree with that it goes without saying that there should be mosques in Sweden. One respondent sheds light on this by turning the problem around:

"Why should immigrants adjust completely to the Swedish society, isn't it the society that should adjust to its inhabitants. All of Swedish culture & tradition is built by immigrants throughout the ages, if it wasn't there (the immigration) the whole country would stagnate."

Statements which load in the factor *Multiplicity enriches*

- A. It's nice to work with people from other cultures.
- B. It would be good if more persons with an immigrant background were recruited to my profession.
- C. There should be more persons with an immigrant background in the political conventions.

Table 3. Multiplicity enriches

Manifest variables	A	B	C	Factor loadings
A nice to work with other cultures				.35
B more immigrants recruited to my profession	.29***			.36
C more immigrants in the political conventions	.25*	.37***		.42

That *Multiplicity enriches* is commented by one respondent:

"We should be more open to the unfamiliar. Learn. Life would be richer."

Four themes point to a wish to keep society monocultural. These statements are gathered and designated *Demand for exclusion*, *Demand for assimilation*, *Exoticism of other cultures* and *Depreciation of immigrants*.

Statements which load in the factor *Demands for exclusion*

- A. It's good if people marry only within their own ethnical group.
- B. It's good for a society if people with different cultures live separated and don't mix.
- C. Immigrants who have arrived from countries outside Europe should return to their countries of origin.
- D. It goes without saying that people who were born in Sweden ought to have some advantages in the society.

Table 4. Demands for exclusion

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	Factor loadings
A marry within ethnical group					.63
B different cultures live separated	.56***				.93
C immigrants from outside Europe should return	.28***	.55***			.48
D people born in Sweden advantages	.36***	.54***	.50***		.47

The statements in the factor *Demand for exclusion* speak for maintenance of an "us-and-them"-thinking, where immigrants should not be mixed with Swedes. Immigrated groups will live excluded from

Swedish society and if they are non-European they should also return to their countries of origin. The Swedes should furthermore have advantages, because they were born in Sweden.

Statements which load in the factor *Demands for assimilation*

- A. All immigrant children should learn from the beginning that Swedish is their first language.
- B. Immigrants who plan to stay in Sweden should in their own interest be as similar to Swedes as possible.
- C. Only immigrants who speak Swedish should be allowed to acquire Swedish citizenship.

Table 5. Demands for assimilation

Manifest variables	A	B	C	Factor loadings
A immigrant children Swedish is first language				.44
B immigrants should be similar to Swedes	.47***			.75
C speak Swedish to acquire citizenship	.34***	.49***		.55

The concept assimilation means giving up the own culture and internalise the culture of the majority. *Demand for assimilation* implies that immigrants should become as Swedish as possible and leave their own culture and their own language. To speak Swedish is even set as a demand to become a Swedish citizen. This is expressed by one respondent:

"I definitely think that immigrants should keep their mother tongue and teach it to their children BUT that doesn't rule out that it is extremely important to learn to speak and understand Swedish. To fairly understand and speak Swedish I think could be a criterion in order to obtain Swedish citizenship."

The demand for assimilation implies that the respondents think that immigrants who plan on staying in Sweden, in their own interest should become as much like Swedes as possible. In this theme there are a lot of comments about the language. While someone writes that it is not a demand, others think that it is important.

"It is important that every person living in Sweden learn Swedish to be able to participate in the Swedish society and its rules."

The language seems to be the key to a Swedish behaviour concerning Swedish rules. One respondent even feels concern that other countries' rules will take over:

"Think it would be alarming if other countries' rules etc. get the upper hand over the Swedish society. Integration in Swedish society is completely OK."

The respondent has as many others misunderstood the word integration. Integration is a mutual process where all parts adjust to each other. Integration into indicates the attitude that immigrants should be assimilated in the Swedish society.

Statements which load in the factor *Exoticism of other cultures*

- A. Muslim immigrant parents in Sweden do not pay attention to what is best for their children.
- B. So called "murder of honour" are causally determined by norm and values that are specific for certain cultures.
- C. Islam is a threat to the basic values.
- D. Some cultures are so different from the Swedish one that people from these hardly can adjust to the Swedish society.

Table 6. Exoticism of other cultures

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	Factor loadings
A Muslim not what is best for children					.53
B "murder of honour" specific for cultures	.32***				.39
C Islam is a threat	.48***	.33***			.64
D some cultures different can hardly adjust	.36***	.20*	.37***		.45

The agreement in the statements that show an exoticising attitude toward other cultures implies that the Swedish culture is seen as the norm and other cultures are divergent. This is also charged in the comments with depreciation of immigrants:

"Can a Swede behave the same in their countries? Never."

Statements which load in the factor *Depreciation of immigrants*

- A. A lot of immigrants and refugees come to Sweden to take advantage of our welfare system.
- B. Authorities and mass media often hide uncomfortable data about the consequences and costs of the immigration.
- C. Immigrants in Sweden complain too much about discrimination and racism.
- D. Nowadays you can't express critical opinions about immigration and immigrants without being stamped as a racist.

Table 7. Depreciation of immigrants

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	Factor loadings
A come to take advantage of welfare					.82
B media hide uncomfortable data	.38***				.82
C immigrants complain about discrimination	.42***	.36***			.80
D can't express critical opinions	.49***	.38***	.32***		.74

The respondents who agree with the factor *Depreciation of immigrants* think that people come to Sweden to take advantage of our welfare system and that they complain too much, at the same time as the media hides the problem and individuals are marked as racists if they express critical opinions.

Consequently most of the comments to the themes that points to a monocultural view are about an exotic view of immigrants, like people who do not follow laws and rules and who have come to Sweden solely to take advantages of our society.

### 1. Judgment of the authority's meeting with immigrants

As for the theme judgment of the own authority's meeting with immigrants the officials' answers can be classified into three factors that correlate with a positive attitude toward immigration. I have named these *The authority discriminates immigrants*, *The authority should bring cultural diversity forward* and *The authority should pay special regard to immigrants*. One factor, the fourth factor, *The authority should treat everyone equally* correlates with a negative attitude toward immigration.

Statements which load in the factor *The authority discriminates immigrants*

- A. Customers with foreign background get less attractive offers than other customers.
- B. It's common that the officials force their own cultural values upon the customers with foreign background.
- C. The judgments that are made by my authority are often insensitive to the customers' cultural experiences.
- D. Customers with foreign background often feel discriminated by my authority.
- E. Insensitivity to cultural differences from the officials at my authority may get customers to interrupt the contact with my authority.

Table 8. The authority discriminates immigrants

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	E	Factor loadings
A less attractive offers						.78
B officials force own cultural values	.50***					.78
C judgments insensitive to cultural experiences	.38***	.52***				.59
D feel discriminated	.35***	.47***	.38***			.61
E insensitivity to differences interrupt contact	.42***	.50***	.34***	.53***		.57

Respondents that are positive to multiplicity are also aware of the existence of discrimination at their own authority. In the factor *The authority discriminates immigrants* two statements are about the officials' insensitivity; the judgments are insensitive, as well as the attitude toward cultural differences. Approximately one third of the respondents agree fully or partly with these statements. Instead of considering the customers' cultural background and the possible differences that may exist the officials force their own cultural values upon the customers with foreign background. This attitude is consequently common at the authorities according to approximately one third of the respondents.

Statements which load in the factor *The authority should bring cultural diversity forward*

- A. It's common that the communication with a customer with foreign background leads to misunderstandings.
- B. It's the officials' task to explain Swedish cultural values and norms to customers with foreign background.
- C. It's good if cultural differences between customers with foreign background and officials are brought forward.

Table 9. The authority should bring cultural diversity forward

Manifest variables	A	B	C	Factor loadings
A communication leads to misunderstandings				.47
B officials' task to explain culture	.38***			.79
C cultural differences brought forward	.22*	.42***		.76

The factor *The authority should bring cultural diversity forward* implies that attention should be drawn to differences between people from different cultures since they are positive and form a basis for interesting discussions. A deeper insight about the mutuality in the concept is shown by the respondent who writes:

"I think that the meeting between Swedes and immigrants is enriching for both parts. Moralization shall not occur."

Statements which load in the factor *The authority should pay special regard to immigrants*

- A. It's good if customers with foreign background meet officials with the same ethnical background.
- B. It's best if the communication is in a language that the customer wishes.
- C. It's necessary to be aware of one's own cultural background when one works with customers with foreign backgrounds.

Table 10. The authority should pay special regard to immigrants

Manifest variables	A	B	C	Factor loadings
A same ethnical background				.60
B communication in language customer wishes	.34***			.73
C necessary aware of own culture	.46***	.16*		.72

The statements that are included in the factor *The authority should pay special regard to immigrants* testify to a deeper understanding of what is needed for an integration. One respondent comments this:

"All customers must be able to make their own voice heard, Swedish or non-Swedish. The questions of the customer are the most important. Here we can improve."

One factor, the fourth factor in the theme authority's meeting with immigrants, *The authority should treat everyone equally* correlates with a negative attitude toward immigration. Persons who agree with this consider that any particular consideration to immigrants' needs will not be taken.

Statements which load in the factor *The authority should treat everyone equally*

- A. Nowadays you can't express critical opinions about customers with foreign background without being stamped as a racist
- B. It's a big problem, at my authority, that male customers from certain cultures do not accept the authority of female officials.
- C. You have better treat all customers in the same way irrespective of their cultural background.
- D. The customers' problems are almost the same regardless of their background.

Table 11. The authority should treat everyone equally

Manifest variables	A	B	C	D	Factor loadings
A can't express critical opinions					.75
B do not accept female officials	.29***				.63
C treat all costumers same	.40***	.25***			.47
D problems same regardless of background	.29***	.35***	.48***		.71

This monocultural attitude is based on the Swedish culture. The attitude that immigrants are to be treated like everyone else can seem to be non-discriminating. When factor analyses and other statistic calculations show that this statement correlates with a negative attitude toward immigration, the agreement with the statement can be interpreted as a dissociation of multiplicity. The idea is that it is the Swedish that is the norm and that immigrants should be seen and noticed as little as possible in the society.

To these statements there is a series of comments that characterises a negative attitude. The comments below do not on their own show xenophobia, but they are made by respondents who to a great extent

agree with the statements collected in the factor. That the authorities should not pay special regard to immigrants is expressed in different ways. The meeting has to be fair:

"They should receive the service they are entitled to regardless of background."

The respondent seems to think that individual consideration should not be taken. All people should be treated equally. To give the service the individual customer needs because of a different background, seems to be understood as unfair. Another comment says that there will be unwanted consequences if not everyone is treated equally.

"In matters the police must act the same towards everyone; otherwise the security of justice will fail."

Another motif not to pay special regard to individual needs is the work method that is used in the judgments:

"Because we make judgments according to our rules we cannot make a distinction between people and people depending on culture or nationality."

Even though laws are not mentioned in the questions two respondents comment on immigrants' relation to the Swedish law:

"Regardless of cultural values some behaviours are not acceptable according to Swedish law."

"I think that there should be a mutual consideration. If you have come so far in your new country as to building a house or running a business you have to adjust to Swedish law and regulations/norms just like we have to if we move abroad."

Both comments imply that persons with foreign background would have problems with following Swedish law.

### *1. The authority's work methods*

There is a great difference between the different authorities when it comes to work methods. Only a few of the officials agree on that there is a specially adjusted work method at the authority. However, at one authority there is a special department with officials that are competent in matters related to immigrants. The remaining officials write that they have to find their own solutions or that they can obtain help from persons at the workplace.

The respondents that belong to an authority that has not developed special work methods comment on this in different ways. Some think that they would be needed:

"We probably should..."

The person who gave the comment above works with customers with a foreign background to a smaller extent, which is also the case with the respondent behind the following quote:

"I lack this competence."

A few people consequently feel the need of special work methods, even though the authority has not developed such methods. One respondent, who thinks that there are no special work methods but that it still works well, provides the following comment:

"We invent the wheel every time, but that also happens with our Swedish parents, everything is individual."

One authority testifies to that they have access to persons in the office that can help if it is about Bosnian customers:

"We obtain help from our employee when handling and interpreting Bosnian businesses."

Yet another authority person tries to tie people with foreign background to the authority, even though it has not been successful:

"When employing new staff they look for people with foreign background, but there is only one in a hundred employees that has."

In the municipality eleven percent of the population belong to the group with foreign background and it may seem strange that only "one in a hundred" comes out of this group.

Several comments however are about that immigrants do not need a special treatment. One thinks that the customers should adjust or that one's own authority in particular has no reason to take any special steps. There are many comments that dissociate from the thought that special work methods are needed to meet immigrated persons:

"Why would you need a special work method? In Sweden it should be the same for everyone."

Comments like these are primarily given by persons who in other questions in the inquiry show a negative attitude toward immigration and immigrants. Here it is also mentioned that it is not the authority but the customers who should adjust:

"The person concerned should adjust to Swedish norms and laws."

The respondent behind these words does not seem to think that the authority should oblige their customers. One way to justify this is to refer to laws and ordinances:

"I treat everyone the same according to our laws and ordinances. No special treatment."

Other respondents work at authorities that do not have to adjust their work with the only motivation being that it is not needed for their authority's work:

"Has no relevance for our work. Everyone are treated the same."

"Our work method does not need to be specially adjusted."

Yet another respondent writes that the customers' background does not matter in his work. This person has a foreign background and states that he does not know if he has customers with foreign background:

"I don't know and nor do I care if my customers have a Swedish or a foreign background. It has no relevance to my work."

The view that everyone should be treated equally and that there is no need for special work methods for people with foreign background correlates, as has been mentioned earlier, with a xenophobic attitude. This view is however also prevalent among respondents who are positive toward immigration and immigrants. These respondents however have a different way of motivating why no special work method is needed.

"The meeting – non-Nordic or not – is the important – delicacy/plainness/safety in the profession/humbleness is the most important. 'The fingertip feeling!'"

The respondent has great experience of work with persons with a foreign background and also has close relatives with a non-Swedish background. Also other professionals with similar experiences emphasize that every customer should be met based on individual needs, which of course does not exclude that there are special work methods that suit different groups.

The need for help from an interpreter of course varies between authorities. The authorities that have a lot of contact with recently arrived immigrants are in a greater need of help from an interpreter than authorities that mainly have contact with immigrants who have come further in learning the Swedish language. This is also pointed out by one respondent who writes that:

"The ones I meet have known Swedish (in some case English). They have often been in Sweden so long that the questions are not relevant."

But there is also an attitude that the communication should take place on the conditions of the authority. One respondent writes:

Yet another respondent who very seldom or never uses a professional interpreter writes that she:

"...speaks English and German with customers who speak English/German."

The professional interpreter is consequently rarely used partly because the customer manages Swedish well, but also because the officials choose the language or languages they themselves master.

Consequently, it is unusual with help from an interpreter in the contact with customers with immigrant background. This is often explained with that the customers are proficient in Swedish, but views that mean that the communications should take place with the conditions of the authority, are also brought up.

The interest in immigrant matters is greatest among the authorities that have the most frequent contact with immigrant customers. At these authorities it is also relatively common that the officials actively look for information about norms, values and traditions for some groups of customers with foreign background that they meet at work. A common way of getting knowledge is through a dialogue with the customers.

Often the search is done in a dialogue with the customer:

"I always ask the customers themselves to tell about their home country."

- Two ideal types, summary and discussion

With the results above as a starting point, I can identify and characterise two cultures, or ideal types, of authorities. Ideal types are used within science with the purpose of creating a tool to understand the real world. I want to emphasize that it is two ultimate values that only exist as constructed concepts. The ideal types should be seen as two metaphors that cannot be taken directly from the real world. Different authorities can probably identify with both metaphors, one authority maybe more in one than in the other. I have chosen to label the two ideal types closed and open authority, respectively. In the survey below a polarized picture of the officials' attitude in the both cultures is given.

Table 12. Survey with a polarized picture of the official's attitude in both cultures

	Open authority	Closed authority
<b>Qualification for multicultural work</b>	Some qualifications exist  More education is needed	Lack of qualifications  No special qualifications are needed
<b>Attitude toward immigrants</b>	Multiplicity will be preserved  Society will protect multiplicity  Multiplicity enriches	Demand for exclusion  Demand for assimilation  Exoticism of other cultures  Depreciation of immigrants
<b>Judgment of the authority's meeting with immigrants</b>	The authority discriminates immigrants  The authority should bring cultural	The authority should treat everyone equally

	diversity forward	
	The authority should pay special regard to immigrants	
<b>The authority's work methods</b>	A specially adjusted work method  Interpreter is used when needed  Knowledge is looked for in the meetings with the customers	Everyone is treated as ethnic Swedes  Swedish is spoken in the meeting, if not then English or German

### 1. The open authority

When the officials at the open authority judge their own *qualification for multicultural work*, they say that they to some extent have sufficient qualifications, but they are aware of that they need much more. The comments are about their concern that they think it is difficult even though they do their best. There is awareness of that everybody is not the same, and that we need knowledge to be able to meet each other in a relevant way.

The *attitude toward immigrants* at the open authority can be categorized in three themes that all affirm multiplicity. The officials agree on that society will preserve, protect and create possibilities for multiplicity. Multiplicity is understood as an asset that enriches society. They regard integration as a mutual process and do not judge persons as inferior or superior only as different. Differences are looked upon as interesting, not threatening. The respondents at the open authority are positive to a multicultural society with mosques and immigrants who keep their language and their culture.

When judging their own *authority's meetings with immigrants* the officials at the open authority show an awareness of the existing discrimination. That everybody should be treated equally means that everybody should be treated with respect and empathy based on individual needs. They also think that the authority should bring cultural diversity forward and pay special regard to immigrants, which testify to a deeper understanding of what is needed for an integration that respects and affirm multiplicity and variation in the customer circle.

The authority has developed a special *work method* and has persons that have a high competence within the field to consult. A professional interpreter is used when needed. The officials have a strong interest in multicultural work methods and carry on a constant dialogue with both colleagues and customers to increase the knowledge.

### 2. The closed authority

The awareness of the shortage of the own *qualifications for multicultural work* and the need for knowledge is non-existent at the closed authority. The officials think they know and that it is enough with their own culture as a starting point. To have "life experience" is considered sufficient, and that this experience is Swedish and monocultural is not questioned.

At the closed authority *the attitude toward immigrants* is impressed by a monocultural attitude. Exclusion or assimilation of immigrants is demanded. An exotic view of other cultures and depreciation of immigrants is also found here. The officials think that it is good for a society if people from different cultures live separated or that immigrants become Swedish as fast as

possible. An exotic attitude is often followed by depreciation. Immigrants are considered to come to Sweden to take advantage of society and to break rules and laws.

As with at the open authority the officials at the closed one think that *the authority's meetings with immigrants* should be based on that everyone should be treated equally. The motifs however are different and can be illustrated with an example like "we can't separate people from people" or "regardless of cultural values some behaviour are not acceptable to Swedish law". Once again the view of immigrants as persons that devote to the breaking of rules and laws comes up. At the closed authority the respondents interpret the statement that customers with foreign background feel discriminated against, in a negative way for the immigrant. They think that the feeling of discrimination is mistaken and that the immigrants are whining for nothing. The officials seem to be unaware of the existence of discrimination.

The closed authority is impressed by a monocultural *work method*. Everyone should be treated equally, and as Swedes. "Our work method doesn't need to be specially adjusted" is a typical standpoint. Difficulties with the language that may come up are solved with the official speaking English or some other language he or she might have learned in the Swedish school. The officials also think that no special work method is needed. "There are no problems" one official writes and probably has the own experience of the situation in mind. The respondent probably does not know what the immigrant customer thinks. The closed authority's work method is impressed by an ethnocentric attitude where the starting point is the Swedish culture. In an obvious way the clients are expected to have the same experiences and frames of reference as the Swedish officials.

### 3. Conclusions

My investigation gave two pictures of the meeting between the public authority and the immigrants. Officials with individual opinions and ideas have built the two ultimate values, which I have shown.

Despite the fact that I have encountered a lot of positive opinions and appreciation of the multicultural society I have also found individual everyday racism. This racism is shown when the officials agree with statements that can be characterised as xenophobic or when they comment in a treacherous way.

Some comments in my study are about immigrants as non-belonging (Pettigrew 1998) and the solution according to these comments are to exclude immigrants from Swedish society or to force them to be assimilated. In other words they are supposed to give up their own religion, language and culture and become Swedish. The social categories are in line with Hall's terminology (1997) the "normal" and the "divergent", where the divergent has to change in order to get normal. This ethnocentric attitude is obvious in the social construction of the others at the closed authority.

Like in Eaton's (1998) research about the majority's judgment of the minority as subordinated groups I found depreciating comments about immigrants. The immigrant customers were looked upon as inferior persons because of their ethnic background. They are seen as persons who come to Sweden to break the law and destroy the Swedish culture by not respecting the fundamental values in the country.

At the same time there is ignorance about the minority, its conditions and needs. "Everyone shall be treated in the same way." To treat everyone in the same way and according to the Swedish way is not justice. Taking the Swedish culture for granted, and making it a norm is ethnocentrism and everyday racism.

This individual everyday racism forms an ideology that in accordance to Essed (1991) manifests itself in all part of society and as this article have shown through the closed authority.

The picture of the closed authority has been difficult to watch. I can admit that I would have preferred not to see it. I do not however think that evil has been holding the paintbrush, but rather the ignorance and fear for the unknown. These two diseases can be cured. Knowledge and meetings with the unknown could be prescribed even though the officials are not aware that they need to be cured.

The picture I prefer to rest my eyes upon is about solidarity and respect to people regardless of ethnic origin. Empathy, to understand and be able to place oneself in the other's situation, gives warmth to the

picture. Insecurity and the need for new knowledge give it new nuances to develop and support.

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