

Abstract

Increased migration has changed the sociodemographic landscape in Norway, and Norwegian youth today are more diverse in terms of ethnic origin and religious affiliation. At the same time, Norwegian society has become more open to various sexual identities and orientations. Increasing diversity in ethnic, religious, and sexual identity has made questions of how intergroup relations unfold over time and in different social contexts more salient than ever. The extent to which we are steering towards a blurring of established boundaries or increasing intergroup conflict depends on how social groups perceive and relate to each other. This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature describing and interpreting intergroup relations in increasingly multicultural societies. The topic under investigation is *adolescents' attitudes towards sexual minorities and religious groups*.

This topic is explored through an introduction and three articles. In the first article, I consider the school as a social context for attitude formation. Here, I investigate youth's attitudes towards Muslims, particularly the role of exposure to Muslim peers. The results show that native majority adolescents who attend schools with more opportunities for contact with Muslims also have more positive attitudes towards Muslims. In the second article, I focus on attitudes towards homosexuality among youth of immigrant origins and investigate the role played by exposure to the larger societal context in attitude formation. This article demonstrates that although immigrant-origin youth in general, and particularly those with a background from Muslim-majority countries, hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuality, exposure to Norwegian society over time is associated with more liberal attitudes. The third article explores interreligious attitudes among Christian, Muslim, and nonreligious youth in Norway. The results show that religious youth evaluate other religious minorities in a more positive light, than youth who do not identify as religious. At the same time, however, the results show that different religious groups hold more target-specific negative attitudes: Christians towards Muslims, and Muslims towards Jews. The analyses in all three articles are based on a quantitative survey among students in the first year of upper secondary education in Oslo and Akershus, collected as part of *the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study in Norway (CILS-NOR)*.

A descriptive comparison of the target groups under investigation in this dissertation demonstrates that Muslims are the minority group most exposed as targets of negative attitudes, mainly from native-majority youth. Considering other religious targets, negative attitudes towards Jews are most prevalent among Muslim youth, if only in a relatively small minority. Negative attitudes towards homosexuality were by far most common among youth

originating in the Middle East and Africa, and religiosity appears to play an important role in the acceptance of homosexuality. At the same time, the findings indicate that young people's attitudes are moving in the direction of higher tolerance across groups as they become more exposed to each other. For the majority youth's attitudes towards Muslims, exposure in the form of attending schools with a larger representation of peers from Muslim-majority countries is associated with more positive attitudes. For immigrant-origin youth, including Muslims, and their attitudes towards homosexuality, exposure in the form of longer family residence in Norway is associated with more positive attitudes.

These findings suggest that attitudes are not fixed but open to revision because of direct exposure to the groups in question and as a product of more general societal exposure over time. The analyses thus point towards the possibility of a gradual adaptation and accommodation between groups. Although these findings provide a basis for some optimism concerning how intergroup relations unfold in multicultural societies, it must be stressed that these are slow processes that play out differently in different strata of the adolescent population.