WHAT DRIVES ANTI-MUSLIM SENTIMENT?
A TEST OF RIVAL THEORIES

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**Abstract.** This paper tests the validity of four theories in explaining anti-Muslim sentiment: realistic group conflict, value-based, or symbolic, conflict, intergroup contact and authoritarianism. The findings indicate that group conflict approaches may be of limited value in explaining what drives public hostility to Muslims. Rather, those who are symbolically threatened by out-groups and who hold a more authoritarian outlook tend to have more strongly negative views about Muslims. The findings also suggest that substantive contact with Muslims is likely to have a substantial effect on improving negative perceptions of this specific minority group. Somewhat surprisingly, however, anti-Muslim sentiment does not appear to vary systematically by locality, indicating that a potentially threatening local-level context is unlikely to be relevant in explaining why citizens are more or less hostile to Muslims.
In the past decade, Europe has seen growing public concern about individuals of Muslim faith. Although European populations were perhaps never entirely at ease with Muslims, the events on 9-11 and subsequent bombings in Madrid, London and Glasgow appear to have increased suspicion about Muslims, with significant numbers of citizens expressing negative opinions about this particular minority group. Yet we still know very little about what explains perceptions of Muslims. Using the recently released 2008 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, which contains some rare survey items on attitudes toward Muslims, we investigate the main drivers of public perceptions of Muslims in Britain.

In studies of prejudice and intergroup hostility, several core theories have been advanced to explain what motivates intolerance toward minority groups. The first, ethnic competition theory, traces this hostility to actual or perceived competition and threat from out-groups. The second approach, rooted in symbolic politics theory, contends that hostility to minorities is ultimately motivated by perceived differences in values between the dominant group and minority out-group. An alternative though not inconsistent third approach builds on findings that prejudice in individuals tends to be generalized across different out-groups. Rather than focus on the wider intergroup context, it argues that the propensity to hold these generally prejudiced attitudes is strongly predicted by personality traits or basic values, such as a right-wing authoritarian outlook. A fourth and final approach, intergroup contact theory, holds that substantive contact between groups, for example in the form of friendship, helps to substantially reduce hostility to out-groups, thereby reducing perceptions of threat that would normally result from economic competition, perceived value conflicts and an authoritarian outlook.
In this paper, we test these theories by undertaking an empirical analysis of anti-Muslim sentiment (AMS). Despite a rapidly growing literature on the effects of rising ethno-cultural diversity (e.g. Fieldhouse & Cutts 2010; Laurence 2011; Putnam 2007), including factors that motivate hostility toward immigrants and support for xenophobic parties (Ford & Goodwin 2011; Hopkins 2011; Ivarsflaten 2005; McLaren & Johnson 2007; Schneider 2008), intolerance toward settled Muslim communities has received less attention. Furthermore, existing studies of AMS have often been weakened by a lack of individual-level data, individual-level data that contain a relatively limited range of potential predictors, or by relying heavily on data collected prior to 2001, when hostility toward Muslims was less salient (Sniderman et al. 2004; Sniderman & Hagendoorn 2007; Strabac & Listhaug 2008). These observations also apply to the British case where, despite considerable public debate about the presence and perceived role of Muslims in wider society, there is a striking absence of research on AMS. One mainstream politician, for instance, has suggested that anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain has become socially acceptable and ‘passed the dinner-table test’, yet both the extent and causes of this hostility remain under researched and poorly understood.\(^2\) This is surprising given recent studies on racial hostility and support for xenophobic parties in Britain, which underscore the growing importance of AMS (Bowyer 2009; Cutts, Ford & Goodwin 2011; Ford & Goodwin 2010).\(^3\) This paper begins to address this gap in the literature by drawing on new data to investigate the drivers of AMS in the first decade of the twenty-first century. After setting the issue in context, we utilize data collected in the 2008 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey to examine the drivers of hostility toward Muslims in contemporary Britain.
Anti-Muslim Sentiment in Context: The British Case

Alongside France and Germany, Britain hosts one of the largest Muslim communities in Europe. While the first Mosque was established in 1880, it was not until the post-war period when Muslims arrived and settled in significant numbers. After migrating from India, Pakistan, East Africa and then Bangladesh, by 1980 there were an estimated 750,000-800,000 Muslims (Peach 2005). Most had agrarian backgrounds in Bangladesh or Pakistan, and were later joined by smaller numbers from Turkey, Somalia, Malaysia and Nigeria. Typically, Muslims congregated in deprived and urban areas that relied heavily on the manufacturing sector, mainly in the East End of London, the Midlands, North West and large cities in Scotland. By 2009, it was estimated that the number of Muslims had risen more than two-fold, rising to between 1.8 and 2 million and making Muslims the second largest religious group behind Christians (Saggar 2009).

Though British Muslims attracted controversy during the Salman Rushdie affair in 1989, as in other Western democracies it was not until the events of September 11th 2001 and, subsequently, the murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands, terrorist attacks on London and Madrid, and the Danish Cartoons affair that this minority group garnered considerable publicity. Since 2001, and amidst the increased salience of immigration and security-related issues more generally (Clarke et al. 2009; Goodwin 2011), various surveys suggested that significant numbers of British citizens had become anxious about Muslims. One poll in 2002, for example, indicated that 56 percent of respondents either ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with the suggestion that their values had
little or nothing in common with those of Muslims; 32 percent did not agree that Muslims play a valuable role in society; 26 per cent agreed it was not possible for Islam and Western values to coexist peacefully; and 17 per cent would be disappointed if a Muslim family moved in next door. Subsequent surveys of British public opinion produced similar findings: in 2005, one quarter of respondents expressed agreement with the suggestion that the beliefs of Islam and Western liberal democracy are fundamentally contradictory; in 2008 more than half of respondents thought Muslims should do more to integrate into British society and around the same portion thought Britain was in danger of losing its identity if more Muslims settled; and in 2009 over two fifths of respondents expressed agreement with the statement that ‘even in its milder forms Islam poses a danger to Western civilization’. There is also some evidence of public anxiety over the perceived integration of Muslim communities, with 53 percent of British respondents to one comparative survey expressing the view that Muslims are integrating either ‘poorly’ or ‘very poorly’ (meanwhile 56 percent of respondents across six European Union member states held this view).

Findings from more comprehensive surveys similarly point toward significant levels of anti-Muslim sentiment among the British population. According to the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey in 2003, more than three fifths of those in Britain agreed with the suggestion that Muslims are more loyal to other Muslims around the world than to their fellow British citizens; more than half of respondents endorsed the suggestion that Britain will begin to lose its identity if more Muslims arrive and settle; almost the same number expressed agreement with the suggestion that Muslims can never be truly committed to Britain; and one quarter would feel unhappy if a relative married a Muslim.
Further analyses of these data concluded there had emerged ‘a considerable degree of hostility to Muslims in Britain and concern that this group poses a threat to the values and identity of non-Muslim citizens’ (McLaren & Johnson 2007: 720). Nor has there emerged much evidence since these surveys that public anxiety over, and hostility toward, Muslim communities has subsided (Voas & Ling 2010). In a more recent edition of the BSA survey in 2008—used in the analyses below—only one of every four Britons expressed positive feelings toward Islam while more than half of the respondents said they would feel ‘bothered’ if a Mosque was built in their local community (in contrast, only 15 per cent felt the same way about the construction of a church).

Explaining Anti-Muslim Sentiment (AMS): Theoretical Avenues

Despite those findings above, public hostility toward British Muslims has mostly escaped serious investigation. Given this paucity of existing literature on the topic, we turn to the key theoretical perspectives used to explain hostility to out-groups more generally. These include ethnic competition theory, symbolic politics theory, intergroup contact theory and work on right-wing authoritarianism (Coenders et al. 2004; Savelkoul et al. 2010; Scheepers et al. 2002). The first, ethnic competition theory, draws on a synthesis of realistic group conflict and social identity theories and would contend that hostility to Muslims should be induced by actual or perceived competition from this group (Blalock 1967; Tajfel & Turner 1979). In Britain, for example, intergroup competition over social housing and community regeneration grants from central government have often been presented as the main drivers of hostility among white British citizens toward immigrants.
and Muslims (Cantle 2001). This approach leads us to expect that negative perceptions of Muslims will be concentrated most heavily among citizens with low socio-economic status, who are more likely than other social groups to feel they are competing with, and are under threat from, this minority group. It has also been shown, for example, how members of deprived social groups and those with no formal qualifications are more likely to endorse political parties that offer explicitly anti-Muslim policies (Ford & Goodwin 2010). One of the few existing studies of anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe also highlights the potential importance of resource-based conflict in explaining negative perceptions of Muslims (Strabac & Listhaug 2008). Given that the unemployed, unskilled and semi-skilled (male) workers, the poorly educated and citizens who are dissatisfied with their social position are more likely to exhibit higher levels of hostility toward immigrants and Muslims (Quillian 1995; McLaren 2003; Schneider 2008; Strabac & Listhaug 2008), we might expect this exclusionary outlook to transfer onto attitudes to Muslims in the British case.

In Britain, negative perceptions of Muslims among more economically insecure groups may well be enhanced by the fact that British Muslims tend to experience disproportionately high rates of deprivation. Even after accounting for housing costs it is estimated that 60 per cent of Muslims of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage are in the bottom quintile of income distribution, compared to 27 per cent of black Caribbean and 26 per cent for Indian communities (Saggar 2009: 39). Thus, in terms of competition for jobs, social housing and other social benefits, there are very real reasons why the most deprived in British society will feel most threatened by Muslims. This leads us to hypothesize that (H1) anti-Muslim sentiment will be strongest among the unemployed,
citizens from lower occupational classes (specifically, manual workers), citizens who reside in social housing provided by the local authority, and those without formal qualifications.

Ethnic competition theory also puts forward several hypotheses at the contextual level. First, it leads us to expect that negative feelings toward Muslims will be encouraged by certain neighbourhood level characteristics. Indeed, the fact there is considerable variation in negative attitudes toward perceived out-groups within countries suggests these contextual factors have important effects (Savelkoul et al. 2010). Studies of intergroup hostility lead us to expect that negative attitudes toward Muslims will be most pronounced within areas where rates of unemployment and deprivation are high, and where there are large Muslim populations (Quillian 1995; Schneider 2008; Semyonov et el. 2006). In Britain, local ethnic context has been shown to affect levels of racial hostility among white citizens, with residential proximity to Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations being associated with more negative attitudes toward these minority ethnic groups (Bowyer 2009). Similarly, research reveals that support for xenophobic parties is strongest within local authorities where there are large populations of Muslims of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage (Ford & Goodwin 2010). Building on these studies and others, we investigate the extent to which local context is likely to play an important role in encouraging anti-Muslim sentiment.

An alternative interpretation of group-based hostility is in terms of symbolic politics, which suggests that intolerance toward out-groups is motivated less by resource conflicts than by perceived value differences between the majority group and the out-group. In the United States, for example, early research on white attitudes to African-
Americans highlighted the importance of perceived differences in fundamental values in explaining anti-Black prejudice (Kinder & Sears 1981). Similarly, in Europe research on public attitudes toward immigrants has revealed the importance of perceived threats to key values and ways of life in explaining anti-immigrant hostility (Sniderman, Hagendoorn & Prior 2004; Sides & Citrin 2007). Here, we explore the possibility that anti-Muslim sentiment may be driven in part by perceived threats to key values in Britain, namely general tolerance of diversity and respect for gender equality. Specifically, our hypotheses are that (H2) those who are most tolerant of diversity and emphasize the importance of gender equality (H3) will display relatively higher levels of AMS. We also hypothesize (H4) that those who are more generally xenophobic will display higher levels of AMS.

Underlying these first two theories is a third approach that puts stronger emphasis on individual differences rather than the wider intergroup context. Building on findings that citizens who are prejudiced against one out-group also tend to be prejudiced against other out-groups (Cohrs & Asbrock 2009; see Zick et al. 2008), this account emphasizes the importance of individual personality and basic values as predictors of this generalized prejudice.9 Specifically, this prejudice is often traced to a right-wing authoritarian outlook that encompasses attitudinal clusters such as authoritarian aggression, submission and conventionalism which leads to concerns about social order, stability and security (Altemeyer 1981, 1998; Cohrs & Asbrock 2009). Seen from this perspective, it might be that citizens who hold this authoritarian outlook perceive Muslims as a threat to social order, established authority and wider society. Our fifth hypothesis (H5), then, is that those expressing more authoritarian values will also display higher levels of AMS.
The final approach to be analyzed here, intergroup contact theory, contends that contact with potentially threatening groups reduces hostility to out-groups (Allport 1954). Generally, there is convincing evidence (Brown & Hewstone 2005; McLaren 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp 2006) that when this contact takes place under ‘optimal’ conditions it can reduce prejudice and foster empathy toward minority groups, including Muslims (Pettigrew et al. 2007; Wagner et al. 1989). Unlike more superficial forms of contact, intergroup friendship is considered especially important on the basis that it is a more substantive form of interaction, can lead to extensive and sustained contact in different social contexts, enable members of the majority to empathize with the minority, and provide access to wider cross-group networks (Pettigrew et al. 2007). This is supported by findings that reveal how friendship between members of different groups has a substantial negative impact on prejudice (Hamberger & Hewstone 1997; Hewstone et al. 2006; McLaren 2003). Based on these findings, and broader evidence of the role of contact in moderating perceived threat (Savelkoul et al. 2010; Schneider 2008; Turner et al. 2007), we hypothesize that (H6) citizens who report having friendships with Muslims will feel less threatened by, and hostile toward, this minority group.

Data and Measures

We examine the drivers of AMS by analysing survey data collected in the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, over the period 2007-2008. Our analysis is restricted to 2184 respondents in England who did not claim to be Muslim. To construct our anti-Muslim sentiment dependent variable, we utilize a feeling thermometer in which respondents were asked their feelings toward Muslims on a scale of 0-100. This variable was
recoded such that the high value of 100 represented higher levels of anti-Muslim sentiment.

Our key independent variables are measured as follows. Economic deprivation is measured with the following variables: self-reported unemployment; whether the respondent works in manual or non-manual employment; whether the respondent claims to rent his/her accommodation from the local authority; and whether the respondent has any educational qualifications. The first of our indicators of potential symbolic threat, tolerance of diversity, is measured with an item that captures attitudes to gay marriage. Specifically, respondents were asked the following: ‘Which of these statements comes closest to your view about how same sex couples should be treated in law? Should be allowed legally to marry, Should be allowed legally to form civil unions, but not marry, Should not be allowed to obtain legal recognition for their relationships’. This variable was recoded such that 1 = against allowing same-sex couples to marry and 0 = all other values. The second indicator of potential symbolic threat, support for gender equality, was measured with the following item: ‘A husband’s job is to earn money; a wife’s job is to look after the home and family?’ Response choices ranged from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, with high values representing stronger support for gender equality. We also examine whether the respondent expresses anti-immigration sentiment as a measure of xenophobia, which we use as an indicator of symbolic threat; the survey item for this measure is ‘Do you think the number of immigrants to Britain nowadays should be increased a lot, increased a little, remain the same as it is, reduced a little or reduced a lot?’ While this survey item may be capturing both economic based threat and symbolic threat, existing research on anti-immigration sentiment in Europe generally points to the
conclusion that symbolic threats to culture and values far more strongly predict anti-immigration sentiment than economic-based concerns (Sides & Citrin 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn & Prior 2004). We thus use this item as a proxy for potential general symbolic threat posed by out-groups, which we refer to as xenophobia, or a general hostility to foreigners. Moreover, whether the respondent reads tabloid newspapers that are often associated with xenophobic coverage (i.e. the *Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Star*) was also measured.

The third theoretical approach outlined above leads us to expect that prejudice toward Muslims will be driven by right-wing authoritarianism, namely beliefs in coercive social control, in obedience and respect for authority, and in conforming to traditional moral and religious norms and values (Altemeyer 1981; Pratto et al. 1994). In this case, we expect that individuals who lean toward authoritarianism on the libertarian-authoritarian scale (see Heath, Evans & Martin 1994; Evans, Heath & Lalliee 1996 for discussion of the methodological and theoretical construction of the index) will be more prejudiced toward Muslims. Authoritarianism is measured using an additive index consisting of the following items: ‘young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values’; ‘people who break the law should be given stiffer sentences’; ‘for some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence’; ‘schools should team children to obey authority’; ‘the law should be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong’; and ‘censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.’

In addition, we control for the possibility that AMS may be partly driven specifically by security concerns given the increased salience of al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism. This is measured with the following item: ‘Which do you think is more important: protecting
your civil liberties and privacy from being invaded, or protecting your safety and surroundings from terrorism?’

Our measure of intergroup contact is respondents’ answers to the question of whether they have any close friends who are Muslim (coded 1 for those who claimed to have Muslim friends and 0 otherwise). This measure holds the advantage of specifically probing intergroup friendship rather than weaker forms of contact, such as having work colleagues who are Muslim.

We also control for age, gender, whether the respondent was non-white (self-reported), and their ideological position on a left-right spectrum. Finally, in order to try to account for the possibility of some respondents simply giving more negative views on most issues and/or generally being alienated, we control for life satisfaction, measured with ‘All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Using this card, please answer using the scale where 1 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied’.

The inclusion of these survey items inevitably meant that any modeling approach needed to take account of a large amount of missing data. The analysis of the missing data was handled through the estimation-mobilization (EM) algorithm to compute missing data estimates using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) (Muthén & Muthén, 2005). The FIML estimation approach is commonly preferred to other approaches such as listwise deletion, pairwise deletion and mean substitution because it yields unbiased parameter estimates and standard errors under missing at random (MAR) and missing completely at random (MCAR) (Little & Rubin, 1987). For our models to be reliable, the FIML estimation procedure will produce such unbiased estimates providing
the ‘missingness’ is at least MAR. However, there is also growing evidence that FIML is preferable to these other missing data approaches even in the non-ignorable situation (Wothke, 1998). After testing the missing data, it was clear that any predictors that were significant were allowed for in the model. In effect they were randomly missing conditional on other variables in the model, so at worst, they were MAR.

Model Results
To examine the key drivers of anti-Muslim sentiment, we use an ordinary least squares regression approach to reflect the fact that our dependent variable is continuous and measured on a linear scale. Table 1 presents the results from our regression analyses. Model 1 tests whether anti-Muslim sentiment is strongest among those citizens with low economic status, no formal education and who reside in social housing and should thus generally feel that their scarce resources are under threat from minority groups (H1). Model 2 incorporates our attitudinal and contact variables in order to examine alternative hypotheses such as group based hostility in terms of symbolic politics (H2, H3, and H4); the possibility that citizens with authoritarian values and security concerns are more likely to be hostile to Muslims (H5); and intergroup contact theory as tested through friendships with Muslims (H6). Model 3 represents our full model and includes all the attitudinal and contact variables examined in Model 2 along with additional controls such age, gender, ethnicity, alienation (life satisfaction) and a measure of individuals’ ideological positions. The R square statistics are reported for each individual regression and indicate an improvement in fit when attitudinal and contact variables are added to the model.
The results in Model 1 suggest that when it comes to individual-level realistic group conflict our findings mirror those of recent analyses of anti-immigration sentiment in Europe (Sides & Citrin 2007; McLaren & Johnson 2007). For the most part, citizens who would be expected to feel most threatened by Muslims, namely those in manual work and those who are unemployed or rent from the local authority, are no more or less hostile toward Muslims than others. On the other hand, one of our realistic threat items - having no qualifications - is statistically significantly related to anti-Muslim sentiment, although the size of the effect is perhaps smaller than might be expected. On average, individuals who have no formal qualifications score only 4 points higher on the 100-point thermometer of anti-Muslim sentiment than those who have a secondary level of education (Model 1, Table 1). At the same time, and as expected, those with a university degree express lower levels of AMS, as shown in Model 1 of Table 1. Whether this is because the university-educated are less likely to feel threatened by intergroup competition is not entirely clear. That is, education is likely to be capturing more than just realistic threat and instead may be also teaching individuals skills or values that lead to a relatively measured approach when it comes to potential out-groups like Muslims (see McLaren & Johnson 2007). It is also important to note that once the attitudinal variables are added to our model (Model 2), the coefficient for those with a university degree becomes statistically insignificant. Thus, education at degree-level is clearly operating indirectly in Model 2 via attitudinal variables. Our no qualifications category
remains statistically significant in Model 3 (full model with controls) but the size of the coefficient drops slightly (from 4.17 to 2.73).

Both Models 2 and 3 include a set of key independent variables that pertain to values, and allow us to explore our second hypothesis that anti-Muslim sentiment is driven more strongly by perceived value conflicts between Muslims and the remainder of the British population. The expectation was that citizens who are more supportive of diversity and gender equality should have relatively lower levels of anti-Muslim sentiment. In fact, our findings indicate that those who are against gay marriage are also more hostile toward Muslims (by almost 4 points on the AMS scale, according to both Models 2 and 3, since the coefficients are relatively similar in both models) even after controlling for other variables. That is, rather than being a result of perceived disagreement over fundamental values (or this value in particular), anti-Muslim sentiment appears to be part of a more general conservative outlook. Similarly, those who agree that wives ought to stay home while their husbands earn a living also have higher levels of anti-Muslim sentiment, which is the opposite of what was predicted. Presented slightly differently, those who disagree that wives ought to stay at home tend to score lower on the AMS scale. The range of this latter variable is 1-5, and so the maximum effect of the variable is approximately 5 points on our 100-point feeling thermometer; the civil partnership item is dichotomous, and so the maximum effect for this variable is 3.71.

These two sets of results appear to reflect the confluence of liberal/authoritarian outlooks. Citizens who are more favourable toward gender equality and more favourable toward equal treatment of same-sex couples are less hostile toward Muslims, whereas those who oppose these trends and appear to hold a more authoritarian outlook are more
hostile toward this minority group. Thus, if AMS is motivated by some degree of perceived value conflict, this is certainly not reflected in the findings presented here. If anything, anti-Muslim sentiment appears to be driven in part by a more general preference for a traditional way of life, where women stayed at home and homosexuals were castigated. Given these findings, it is therefore not surprising that we also find evidence of more generalized prejudice among those who are hostile toward Muslims. Anti-immigration sentiment is also associated with anti-Muslim sentiment: those who are most negative about immigration are also more negative about Muslims. The size of this effect is substantively significant as well. The anti-immigration variable ranges from 1-5, and so the maximum effect of this variable—moving from saying immigration should be increased a lot to saying it should be reduced a lot—is 14.48 (based on the coefficient reported in Model 3). Most responses (95 percent) to this question, however, range from ‘remain as is’ to ‘reduced a lot’, and the size of the effect between these categories (categories 3-5) is approximately 7 points on the 100-point AMS scale. We can also examine the StdYX standardised regression coefficients in both Model 2 and 3 to determine the strength of the independent variables. This makes intuitive sense given that the coefficient is scaled to reflect the difference between the spread of the independent and dependent variable. In both models, anti-immigrant sentiment had the strongest effect of all the other variables on the outcome variable. Therefore, these findings provide evidence that more generalized prejudice is a key driver of anti-Muslim sentiment.

The findings for authoritarianism confirm the above findings for gender and sexual equality: it is those who long for traditional ways of doing things rather than those
with a more libertarian outlook who are most hostile to Muslims. The libertarian-authoritarianism scale ranges from 1-5, and so the maximum effect of this variable is almost 16 points on the 100-point AMS feeling thermometer (again, see Model 3 of Table 1). However, the range between the 10th and 90th percentiles is only 1.5 points (ranging from 3-4.5), and so the size of the effect in practice comes closer to approximately 6 points. The standardised coefficient is also fairly large indicating that authoritarianism is a significant driver of anti-Muslim sentiment. The findings also indicate that concern about security and terrorism is significantly related to AMS, but with a relatively weak effect. The difference between those who think it is more important to protect civil liberties and those who think protecting against terrorism is more important is only 2.5 on our AMS scale (see Model 3 of Table 1). Thus, compared to other variables in the model, concern specifically about terrorism has a relatively small impact on anti-Muslim sentiment.

We now turn to our findings regarding the effects of intergroup contact on anti-Muslim sentiment. Consistent with existing findings on anti-immigration sentiment, which reveal how experiencing contact with immigrants can reduce hostility toward immigration (Pettigrew 1998; McLaren 2003; Sides & Citrin 2007), we find that having Muslim friends reduces hostility toward Muslims. In fact, sharing friendships with members of the Muslim community reduces AMS by 11 points on our 100-point scale of AMS (see Model 3 of Table 1). Considering that the range on the AMS scale between the 10th and 90th percentiles is only 70 points—ranging from 20 to 90—and between the 25th and 75th percentiles is only 20 points—ranging from 50 to 70—the impact of this contact
variable is quite powerful. Thus, as predicted, contact with Muslims in the form of friendship has a substantial effect on anti-Muslim sentiment.23

The results for several control variables are also worth noting. As predicted, those citizens who are more satisfied with their lives tend to be less hostile to Muslims. This variable ranges from 1-10, so the maximum effect of the variable is well over 6 points on our AMS scale (see Model 3 of Table 1). However, the range between 10th and 90th percentiles for this variable is only 5 points (ranging from 5-10), and so the size of the effect in practice comes closer to 3 points.24 That is, while life satisfaction does seem to have some bearing on AMS, the effect of this is relatively weak. Somewhat surprisingly, young people appear to be more hostile toward Muslims than older generations. This effect remained positive even in a bivariate analysis (results not shown).25 Although we did not have any specific prediction for this control variable, it is surprising that it is younger people who express the most AMS. As with the no qualifications variable, the size of the effect for age is not substantial, but the direction is still unexpected. On the one hand, this contradicts earlier findings on anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe (Strabac & Listhaug 2008), and the age profile of British citizens who support anti-Muslim parties at elections (Ford & Goodwin 2010). On the other hand, however, it may be that the finding is capturing hostility in the more deprived sections of British youth, among which openly anti-Muslim groups such as the English Defence League (EDL) have been recruiting support since 2009. Finally, in terms of our control variables, women tend to be less hostile toward Muslims than men. While this might appear surprising given frequently negative coverage of Muslims’ views toward the rights of women, it is consistent with findings across Europe that demonstrate how men are overwhelmingly more likely than
women to exhibit racial prejudice, and support xenophobic political parties (Ford 2008; Ford & Goodwin 2010).

Beyond individual-level factors, it might also be that AMS is influenced by local context. As outlined above, ethnic competition theory would lead us to expect that a context that is economically threatening - where there are higher levels of unemployment and a larger minority group population - would encourage higher levels of anti-Muslim sentiment. In contrast, intergroup contact theory would lead us to predict that larger numbers of a minority population in the locality would produce more contact between the minority group and the majority, thereby reducing levels of anti-Muslim sentiment. However, when the variance components of our AMS indicator are examined across both the ward and local authority levels, the evidence overwhelmingly indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in levels of anti-Muslim prejudice across these different geographical units.26 These findings suggest that it is highly unlikely that contextual factors, such as the number of Muslims in the local population or the state of the local economy, have a strong effect in explaining what drives intolerance toward Muslims.27

While our geographical units are smaller, and are a more accurate reflection of local dynamics, we can draw confidence in our findings regarding the lack of effects of context from other studies of anti-Muslim prejudice such as a national-level study of anti-Muslim prejudice based on World Values Survey data (Strabac & Listhaug 2008). This similarly suggests that the proportion of Muslims within a country has no impact on levels of anti-Muslim prejudice. This is also consistent with findings regarding anti-immigration sentiment that indicate that levels of migration to a country no longer seem
to matter in predicting anti-immigration sentiment (Semyonov, Raijman & Gorodzelsky 2006; Sides & Citrin 2007). Thus, anti-Muslim sentiment seems to exist regardless of the actual numbers of Muslims living in the individual’s local context, or the degree of economic threat in the local context.

In summary, the analyses above point to the conclusion that, compared to other potential influences on anti-Muslim sentiment, general xenophobia, contact with Muslims in the form of friendships and authoritarianism have the most substantial effects on negative perceptions of Muslims, even after controlling for other variables. Thus, a generally hostile outlook towards newcomers is associated with AMS, as is a general desire for a more authoritarian and more traditional way of doing things. The latter is reflected both in terms of the general authoritarianism measure and in terms of the respondent’s preferred treatment of women and same-sex couples. Less important in explaining AMS is resource-based conflict over jobs and housing, security concerns, life satisfaction, gender, and local context. We now turn to the conclusion to discuss the implications of our findings.

**Conclusions**

What do our findings indicate about the causes of anti-Muslim sentiment in contemporary Britain, and more generally? To the extent that factors such as type of work, employment status and social housing capture the potential for resource-based conflict, it appears that this is *not* what is motivating anti-Muslim sentiment. On the other hand, education does play some role in driving anti-Muslim sentiment, both directly and indirectly, and most
likely through factors like xenophobia (as measured by anti-immigration sentiment), egalitarianism (in terms of gender and sexual preference issues), and authoritarianism. Whether this is a result of the additional skills and resources that education provides, or is a result of more fundamental changes in individual values and outlook that education imbibes, is unclear. However, given the relatively small effect of education on anti-Muslim sentiment and the lack of effect for other resource-oriented variables we would tend to conclude that, on balance, anti-Muslim sentiment does not appear to be motivated much by resource-based conflict.

Importantly, anti-Muslim sentiment also does not appear to vary by local context. We find similar levels of AMS regardless of whether the surrounding area has a larger or smaller proportion of Muslims, or higher or lower rates of unemployment. This would imply that community-based attempts at reform that focus on affecting the local context, for example bolstering local employment rates, may not address the underlying grievances that are fuelling hostility toward Muslims.

Instead, our findings suggest that anti-Muslim sentiment is more of a value-based conflict, but not one of the type that we initially expected. One of the factors often discussed in the above-mentioned ‘dinner party conversations’ about Muslims concerns perceived expectations about Muslims’ preferences regarding the role of women in society and the perception that Muslims are intolerant toward differing lifestyles that most citizens of West European democracies have come to accept, such as homosexuality. Our findings, however, suggest that it is not the individuals who are protective of gender equality and accepting of homosexuality who are most hostile toward Muslims. Instead, this hostility appears to be motivated by a broader right-wing
authoritarian outlook that entails nostalgia for traditional ways of doing things. It is possible, therefore, that for many in Britain, Muslims are but one symbol of vast social changes that have disrupted more traditional ways of life over the post-war period, changes which produce some degree of uncertainty and disquiet. It should also be noted that our indicators of potential perceived value differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in western democracies may be indicating a broader personality trait, social dominance orientation (SDO), or a preference for hierarchical versus egalitarian relations between social groups, which leads to concerns for superiority and power over socially insubordinate groups (Altemeyer 1981; Pratto et al. 1994). That is, it may be that our findings reflect the prominence of both right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation in the realm of anti-Muslim sentiment. The latter in particular certainly deserves further exploration in future analyses, using stronger indicators of this construct than are available in existing surveys like the one used here.

On the positive side, we find that contact with Muslims in the form of friendship has a substantial impact on attitudes to Muslims as a whole. While the causal order of this relationship may be questioned, it is important to note that even when pre-existing levels of xenophobia are accounted for having friendships with Muslims is associated with significant reductions in anti-Muslim sentiment. These results provide further evidence that, in terms of countering public hostility toward Muslims, intergroup contact is crucial. More generally, these findings have clear policy implications.

Given the high levels of public anxiety over the presence and perceived role of Muslims in Western societies, our findings provide further evidence that failing to increase opportunities for intergroup contact will mean that significant numbers of the
majority will continue to view minority Muslim communities with suspicion. Conversely, and as is also the case with hostility toward immigrants, future efforts to reduce prejudice toward Muslims will be particularly effective when they encompass contact-based interventions, especially if these lead to more substantive interactions. It has also been shown how intergroup friendship can have extended positive effects by encouraging other members of the majority in-group who are aware of these friendships to report lower levels of prejudice than those who do not experience these extended contact effects (e.g. Paolini et al. 2004). Also important for the findings of this study is evidence that these effects reduce prejudice more strongly among ‘high’ rather than ‘low’ authoritarians, on the basis that the former are driven strongly by a desire to confirm to others (Dhont & Van Hiel 2011; Hodson, Harry & Mitchell 2009). Conversely, given the high levels of public anxiety over Muslims in British society and Western democracies more generally, our findings suggest that without increased levels of intergroup contact relations between majority and minority Muslim communities will continue to be characterized by anxiety and suspicion.
References


*Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 37, pp.255-343


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Table 1. Regression Model of Anti-Muslim Sentiment (BSA survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>StdYX</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>54.34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group conflict</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Manual/Manual Class</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent from Local Authority</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Degree or Higher</td>
<td><strong>-6.80</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.11</strong></td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Degree level</td>
<td><strong>-2.85</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.06</strong></td>
<td>-0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Qualifications</td>
<td>-4.19</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Qualifications</td>
<td><strong>4.12</strong></td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic Politics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against Civil Partnerships</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>3.90</strong></td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree that Husbands Earn and Wives Should Stay Home</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>-1.26</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.06</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Should be Reduced</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>3.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read anti-Immigrant Newspapers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authoritarianism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertarian-Authoritarianism Scale</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>4.19</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security More Important than Civil Liberties</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>2.24</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.05</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim Friends</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>-10.75</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.12</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Age 18-29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>3.87</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer Age 45-59</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Age 60 plus</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>-2.73</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-Right Scale</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>-0.67</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model Fit</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2184</td>
<td>2184</td>
<td>2184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bold denotes significant <0.05 level. β refers to unstandardised estimates; StdYX are the standardised parameter estimates.
Reference category for Education: Secondary level qualification
Reference category for Age: 30-44
The authors are grateful to Roger Stafford and the National Centre for Social Research for assisting with the collection of British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey data, and to the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham for internal funding that has supported this research.

1. For example, Zick et al. (2008) have utilized representative survey data to demonstrate how a range of traits such as xenophobia, anti-Semitism, racism and Islamophobia form a highly consistent syndrome of generalized prejudice.

2. In Allport’s (1954) original formulation, these conditions included: the groups sharing equal status, pursuing common goals, co-operating and receiving institutional support. However, subsequent research suggests that while these conditions are beneficial, they are not absolutely essential for a reduction in prejudice (see Pettigrew & Tropp 2006).

3. Removal of Muslim respondents from the analysis resulted in a loss of 52 observations.

4. Government should redistribute income from the better-off to those who are less well off.

5. Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers.

6. Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth.

7. There is one law for the rich and one for the poor.

8. Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance.

10. Occupation was derived by the BSA team based on answers to questions about what kind of work the respondent does most of the time. Renting status was derived by responses to the questions ‘And now some questions about you and your household. Does your household own or rent this accommodation? [IF RENTS:] From whom?’). Educational qualifications were derived through the questions ‘Have you passed any of the examinations on this card?’ …if yes, ‘Please tell me which sections of the card they are in?’.”

11. Sides and Citrin (2007) include life satisfaction as an indicator of alienation in their analysis of anti-immigrant sentiment, for example.
Data is said to be non-ignorable if the probability of observing a data item is actually dependent on that data item. An example of this is in Likert scales or rating items (like - dislike): when a respondent is free to choose items to rate (e.g., like or dislike), there is the possibility that respondents may exhibit a bias towards rating items they like or dislike therefore the probability of a particular rating is dependent on the ratings of other items. FIML is preferable to other methods even when this occurs.

We ran separate regression models to examine whether predictors used in our model explained missingness. We found some evidence that this was the case and as such consider that the missing data is MAR. This is important because it suggests that the key condition of using the FIML estimator has been met and that the models reported are reliable and robust. Further details are available on request.

We do not report other global indices of model fit (chi-square, comparative fit index, tucker-lewis index, root mean square error of approximation etc) because ordinary least squares regression models will show a perfect fit (either zero or one for these fit indices) as they are completely saturated or have no degrees of freedom (meaning that all the coefficients are estimated).

It is possible that these two items are, in fact, capturing some degree of social dominance orientation (SDO) (e.g., Altemeyer 1981; Pratto et al 1994). This will be discussed further in the conclusion.

The StdYX standardised coefficient is derived by multiplying the unstandardised coefficient by the ratio of the standard deviations of the independent variable (anti-immigrant sentiment in this case) and the dependent variable (anti-Muslim sentiment). The standardised coefficient is interpreted as the change in y (anti-Muslim sentiment) in y standard deviation units for a standard deviation change in x (anti-immigrant sentiment).

The range between the 25th and 75th percentiles is only 1 point (ranging from 3-4 on the 5-point authoritarianism scale).

The StdYX standardised coefficient is large, just below anti-immigrant sentiment. This is fairly robust but cannot be directly compared with anti-immigration sentiment because inter-group contact is a binary covariate. Put simply, a standard deviation change of a binary variable is not meaningful so a comparison using the StdYX standardisation should not be directly made.

The range between the 25th and 75th percentiles is only 3 points (ranging from 6-9 on the 10-point life satisfaction scale).

The bivariate analyses revealed an unstandardised coefficient of 0.47; StdYX of 0.001. When other age categories are added (where middle age 30-44 is the reference category), the unstandardised coefficient for young people aged 18-29 is 2.85; StdYX of 0.04. All analyses were undertaken while taking account for missing data.

Both the null 2 level and 3 level models and both models with individual and area level variables are available from the authors on request.

We have confirmed that this is the case by adding these contextual variables to our OLS models and the effects are indeed limited.