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Diversity disorders: Ethnicity and newsroom cultures

Kurzfassung: Wie in vielen anderen europäischen Ländern auch, findet in Schweden eine anhaltende Debatte über die Beziehung zwischen sozialer Kohäsion und den Medien statt. Der vorliegende Aufsatz untersucht das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen den offiziell vertretenen Diversifikationszielen schwedischer Nachrichtenredaktionen und deren Wahrnehmung durch Journalisten mit Migrationshintergrund. Obwohl die Rolle der Medien in einem multi-ethnischen Kontext während der letzten Jahre intensiv diskutiert wurde, haben schwedische Medienorganisationen bislang noch keine effektiven Mittel entwickelt, wie ethnische Diversität in den Nachrichtenredaktion gefördert und implementiert werden kann.

Die interviewten Journalisten lenken das Augenmerk auf das Dilemma, in den majoritätsdominierten Nachrichtenredaktionen nicht hinreichend akzeptiert zu sein, und betonen die Notwendigkeit, redaktionelle Organisationsstrukturen und die Kultur der Nachrichtenredaktionen zu verändern und die Herausforderungen der ethnischen Diversität neu zu definieren. Der Aufsatz fokussiert die Marktorientierung der Nachrichtenproduktion und argumentiert dass die gegenwärtige Tendenz zum Mainstreaming der kulturellen Diversität von Medieninhalten zu einem Ausschluss von Minoritätsstimmen führen und die Diversifikationsanstrengungen unterlaufen kann.

Abstract: Sweden, as many other European countries, has been engaged in the debate concerning the relationships between social cohesion and the media. The article examines the tension between officially expressed attitudes and diversity goals of Swedish newsrooms and how journalists who have foreign backgrounds perceive these. Despite the intense discussions in recent years concerning media's role in a multi-ethnic context Swedish media organizations have not yet developed an effective means of promoting and implementing diversity in the newsrooms.

The interviewed journalists draw attention to the dilemma of not being accepted in majority dominated newsrooms and stress the need to change editorial organization patterns, newsroom cultures and to re-define journalistic missions regarding ethnic diversity. The article concerns the market focus of news production and argues that the present tendency to mainstream cultural diversity in media content may lead to the exclusion of minority voices and thus undermining diversity efforts.

Introduction

In recent years social cohesion and integration of migrants have gained importance in European media debate, focussing on the responsibilities of the news media in contemporary multi-ethnic societies. Diversity in Swedish newsrooms and in media content has been a topic of discussion for more than a decade. A variety of initiatives to promote media diversity have been put into practice, including strategies to improve representation of minorities and increase recruitment of journalists with minority backgrounds in mainstream media. Despite these efforts the outcome is discouraging. It is evident that Swedish media organizations have difficulties in building diversity into the newsroom processes. Similar situations, lack of change and progress, can also be found in, for instance, the Netherlands, UK and the U.S. (Deuze 2002; *Journalists at Work*, 2002; American Society of Newspaper Editors, 2009).

Numerous studies across the years have concluded that mainstream media is characterized by under-representation and misrepresentation of immigrant and minority groups, as well as by difficulties for ethnic minority journalists in gaining access to the media. Since the 1960s and the civil rights movement, various initiatives to promote diversity and diversity policies have been developed. In the 1960s and 1970s these were mainly based on the ideas of assimilation and integration. In the 1980s multicultural and anti-racist policies replaced the previous paradigm (Cottle 1997: 3-4; Malik 2002: 183). Cottle also claims that efforts concerning cultural representations have become increasingly an issue of the politics of difference and diversity. This change also implicates shifts of institutional arrangements and production regimes. Among the shaping forces that he identifies are the intensified commercial imperatives and the changing politics of multiculturalism (Cottle 1997: 6-8, see also Cottle 2000). Malik observes that these changes amalgamated in what she calls the commercialization of multiculturalism (Malik 2002: 183).

Katharine Sarikakis remarks that the concept of social cohesion has become the antonym of social exclusion and is vague and problematic to use. She contends that social cohesion, media and cultural policy are connected to the changing notions of citizenship and the citizens' relationship to institutions as shaped through policy (Sarikakis 2007: 68-69). News organizations are operating in a commercial media environment, and therefore the need to attract large audiences, including minority communities, are crucial for legitimacy and their survival as institution. Given the changing demographics of Sweden, ethnic diversity efforts have become more important to media organizations if they want to stay in business. But, as Isabel Awad argues, business-driven media policies do not necessarily respond to the democratic needs of a multicultural society (Awad 2008). Instead she explains that a laissez-fair approach to cultural diversity in the media, relying on commercial instead of normative justifications, reduces diversity to a business asset but does not secure a wider diversity of voices and social perspectives in the media. News media also meet competition on a highly diversified market with a multitude of media outlets. The new technologies also involve a change of the nature of journalistic work. Sonja Kretzschmar notes a twofold

media development. On the one hand she observes that competitive media markets enhance mainstream content, which most reflects ethnic majority opinions. On the other she sees the rising problems of disintegration of ethnic minorities in Western European countries (Kretzschmar 2007: 230-231).

This article is concerned with the responsiveness of Swedish media organizations to an increasingly diverse society. In the article I examine the tension between officially expressed attitudes and diversity goals of Swedish newsrooms and how journalists who have foreign backgrounds¹ perceive these. Nine out of ten Swedish media organizations agree that diversity in the workplace is valuable and has positive effects on the company. This is contrasted by the interviewees' disappointment with their company's efforts to improve diversity in hiring and in content. The journalists draw attention to the need to change editorial organization patterns, reporting practices, newsroom cultures and to redefine journalistic missions regarding ethnic diversity. The article draws attention to the market focus of news production and argues that the present tendency to mainstream cultural diversity in media content may lead to the exclusion of minority voices and the undermining of diversity efforts. The discussion finally argues that social cohesion in media policies based on the idea of national unity among the citizens, clash with the claims for recognition and communicative rights in multi-ethnic societies.

The article starts by giving some general features concerning ethnic minorities in Sweden followed by a brief quantitative overview of attitudes towards ethnic and cultural diversity within 100 Swedish news media organizations. The overview also indicates some of the factors that are considered as hampering to diversity. Subsequently, the article presents interviews with journalists who have migrant backgrounds in the Stockholm region. A majority of the interviewed journalists point to the dissonance between the goals expressed in diversity programs and their practical implementations. They tend to believe that adaptation to the organizational culture is required if you want to succeed and point to the difficulties in transforming standardized professional practices. The last section of the article introduces the views of three media managers of different types of Swedish news organizations operating in the Stockholm region. Journalistic improvements and financial necessity seem to be the twin motives to enhance diversity. Specifically, this section focuses on the criticism of reporting conventions and of news values thus touching upon the core values of the professional ideology of journalism.

The article is based on results of the ongoing research project *Mngfaldslinjer: Journalistisk produktion ur ett mngkulturellt perspektiv i Stockholm och Berlin* (*Lines of Diversity: Multicultural perspectives on Journalistic Production in Stockholm and Berlin*), started in 2007. The project analyzes how diversity policies relate to editorial structures, production processes, editorial and individual decision-making.

Measuring diversity

In Sweden 14 per cent of the population is foreign-born, whereas the percentage for Stockholm is 20. The percentage of persons from migrant backgrounds is 17 for the whole of Sweden and 26 for Stockholm. There are approximately 25,000 employed journalists in Sweden, out of whom nearly 50 per cent work in the Stockholm region.² About half of all journalists are women, while only 5 per cent of the journalists are foreign-born with less than 2 per cent born in a non-European country.

The employment rate of journalists who have a non-European background is well below those of doctors, 13 per cent, and university teachers, 7 per cent. In 2007 there were 1,357 foreign-born journalists employed in Sweden. Out of those 34 per cent, or 466 persons, came from other Nordic countries, 35 per cent were born in European countries excluding for the Nordic countries, 18 per cent had Asian origin and 9 per cent were born in North or Central America. All in all, 414 had their origins outside Europe (see figure 1, p. 3).³

The estimated number of foreign-born journalists in the Stockholm region is some 700. In Stockholm the largest immigrant group is from Finland with its 19,000 persons, the next largest group is from Iraq, with 14,700 persons. The third largest group are the 9,500 from Iran followed by 8,700 immigrants from Poland and 6,600 from Turkey.⁴

A survey study conducted in 2005 came to similar results. The study was based on answers from some 1,000 members of the Swedish Union of Journalists. The proportion of journalists from foreign backgrounds was 5 per cent, and in the major cities 7 per cent. The researchers found that the portion of foreign-born journalists was the same in 2005 as in 1999. This is remarkable, the report concludes, considering the fact that the question of diversity and recruitment had been intensely debated during this period. The study also noted that younger journalists (34 years and younger) are less represented than those who were 55 years and older (Djerf-Pierre 2007: 28-30). These findings placed the past years diversity initiatives in a critical light.

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1. By foreign background is intended a person born abroad or whose both parents were born abroad, which is the definition used by Statistics Sweden.
 2. Statistics Sweden. www.scb.se. "Labour market", data from 2007 (accessed June 28, 2009).
 3. Statistics Sweden. www.scb.se. "Labour market" (accessed June 30, 2009).
 4. Stockholms stad. www.stockholm.se. "Statistik om Stockholm/Befolkning", data from 2007 (accessed June 30, 2009).

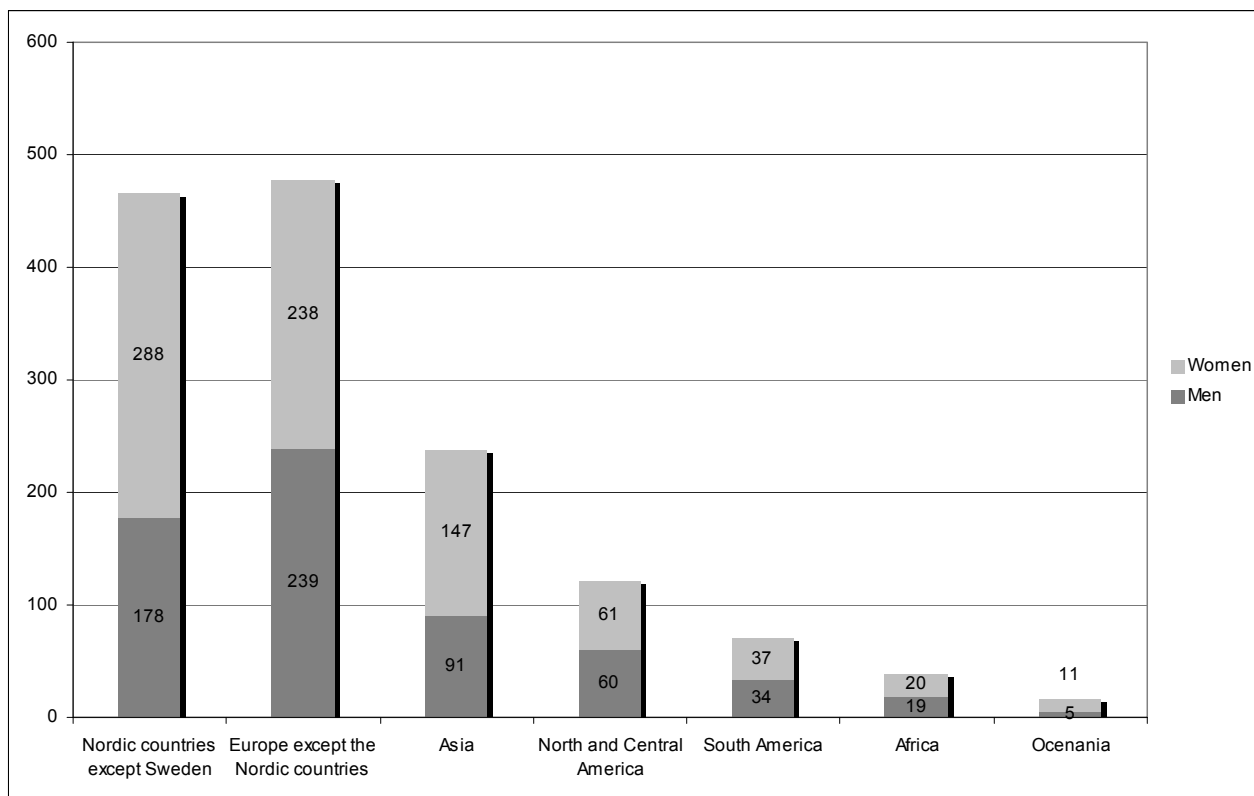


Figure 1: Number of foreign-born journalists by region of birth, yr 2007.

Source: Statistics Sweden, 2007

In a positive understanding diversity is about equal rights and opportunities. In a more negative streak it is also about exclusion and discrimination. The Law on measures for countering discrimination in the workplace on the basis of ethnicity, religion or creed requires employers to take active measures to promote equal rights and opportunities in the workplace regardless of ethnicity, religion or other creed. Such measures are to be goal-oriented and accounted for annually.

The term diversity is generally applied to a variety based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion etc. Diversity in the newsrooms most often refers to hiring people from different backgrounds and to bring new perspectives into reporting. Diversity can also be addressed in terms of news coverage i.e. how stories on migration related issues are reported in the news organization. Until the late 1980s a majority of all Swedish journalists were men (Löfgren Nilsson 2007: 46). But as mentioned above, today every other journalist in Sweden is a woman. In the context of gender equality the ideal of a 50/50 per cent distribution is generally accepted. But in the field of ethnic or cultural diversity the issues of possible and desirable distribution are complicated. As stated earlier, 14 per cent of Sweden's population is foreign-born whereas the proportion seen in Stockholm is 20 per cent. But there is a great variation within the different parts of the Stockholm area. In some of the southern suburbs more than 30 per cent of the population is foreign-born. The percentage for the major cities of Göteborg and Malmö are 20 and 27, respectively. But 95 per cent of the newswriters employed by Swedish media organizations are of Swedish origin. Should the distribution in the newsroom reflect the national, regional or local situation? Is quota at all applicable?

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) has measured minority participants in the newsrooms since 1978. In 2007 the percentage of minority journalists working in America's daily newsrooms declined slightly to 13.6 per cent from 14 per cent the year before. The goal expressed by ASNE is to have the percentage of minorities working in newsrooms nationwide equal to the percentage of minorities in the nation's population by 2025. Currently minorities make up 33 per cent of the U.S. population. The society uses a diversity index to compare the percentage of minorities on staff to the percentage of minorities in the community. Only 13 per cent of newspapers responding to the survey have reached ASNE's goal of parity between newsroom and community.¹ This type of census is not used in Sweden. The distribution of women in the newsrooms is systematically measured, but when it comes to ethnic diversity statistics are sparse. A brief overview

1. American Society of Newspaper Editors <www.asne.org> "Diversity" (accessed June 30, 2009).

of the relation between the percentage of all foreign-born persons in Sweden's population and the percentage of foreign-born journalists indicate that Asian-born are underrepresented, whereas persons born in the Nordic countries are overrepresented among journalists (figure 2).

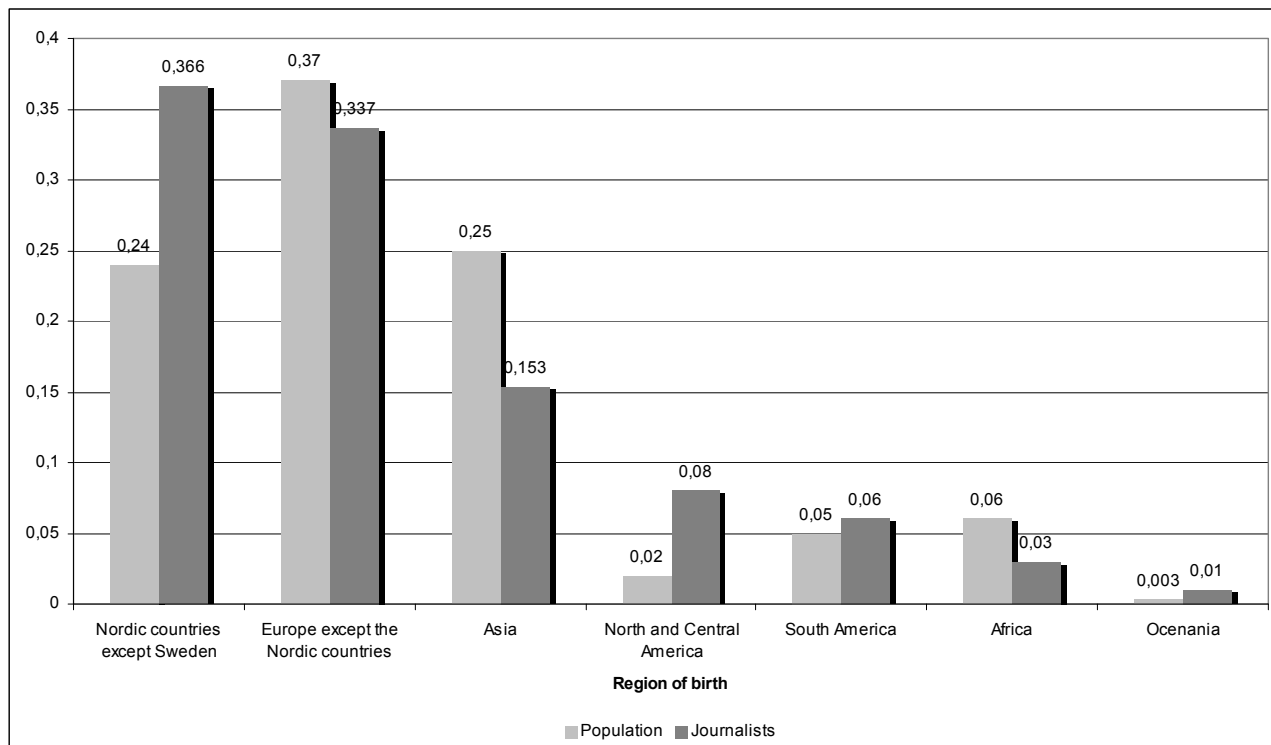


Figure 2: Percentage of foreign-born within the Swedish population and of foreign-born journalists by region of birth.

Source: Statistics Sweden, 2006

In the report *Mångfald som vision och praktik (Diversity in theory and practice)* the diversity management and diversity implementation of six companies and organizations were evaluated (Westin 2001). Charles Westin, professor of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, points out that diversity initiatives tend to be viewed as a means to deal with the consequences of what is considered a problematic immigration rather than a goal in itself (Westin 2001: 13). The researchers report that various officials working with diversity issues are highly critical of categorizing people in terms of ethnicity or culture. In the preparations of this research project I have met similar arguments in my contacts with the Human Resource departments of some media companies. We don't use the concept of ethnicity. It is qualifications and skills that count", one HR consultant said. One of the respondents in my interview study raised the question of how relevant ethnic background was in relation to the scope of this research project.

"How can you single out ethnicity as an explanatory aspect from the facts that I am female and was brought up in a small society in the northern of Sweden by middle-class parents?" (R 6)

It is not possible or desirable to study how ethnicity as an isolated factor explains the respondents' positions and conditions in the workplace. But that does not reduce the importance or the necessity of paying attention to how certain phenomena are understood and construed as ethnic issues by the respondents and by their workplaces.

In the news industry ethnic diversity is taken into account in the formulation of new media strategies to attain new markets and audiences. Efforts to increase diversity include both mission and market justifications. Diversity is part of the democratic mission of the news media and of its moral obligation to represent an adequate reporting to the citizens. In addition, diversity efforts are important to media organizations for financial reasons. Those who ignore the demographic shift may not survive in the marketplace.

The survey

A telephone survey study was conducted in May and June of 2008 in order to explore attitudes toward diversity in news media. Swedish news organizations of various sizes, comprising newspapers, radio and TV were called, and 103 participat-

ed. Officials in charge of the companies' diversity programs responded to the 13-question survey.

The study reveals that the concept of diversity is closely linked to ethnicity and gender and only to a lesser extent to age, religion and sexual orientation. Of the surveyed companies 87 per cent report that diversity efforts are very important or important to the company. Most companies agree that diversity programs are good for business, have an influence on the journalistic product and the good will of the company. However, newspapers lag behind in their diversity programs compared to radio and TV. One explanation is the legal requirements of public service broadcasters to serve all, to support equality and to reflect all of society. Less than one third of the newspapers report that they have a diversity plan in writing, whereas the share is 60 percent in TV and nearly 90 percent in the radio broadcasting institutions. This has consequences for how the organizations view and value diversity efforts. Organizations with diversity plans have significantly more positive assessments of the benefits of diversity. If you consider the fully agree responses there are significant distinctions between newspapers on one hand and radio and television on the other. The newspapers rate the benefits of diversity less than television and radio newsrooms. The newspapers are much less convinced that diversity creates a better working climate in the workplace, better reflects the demands of the audience, improves the good will of the company, makes the company more attractive as an employer and more competitive, or improves the journalistic product. However, if you add up the ratings of agree and fully agree differences even out in how the different media organizations perceive and value putting diversity into practice.

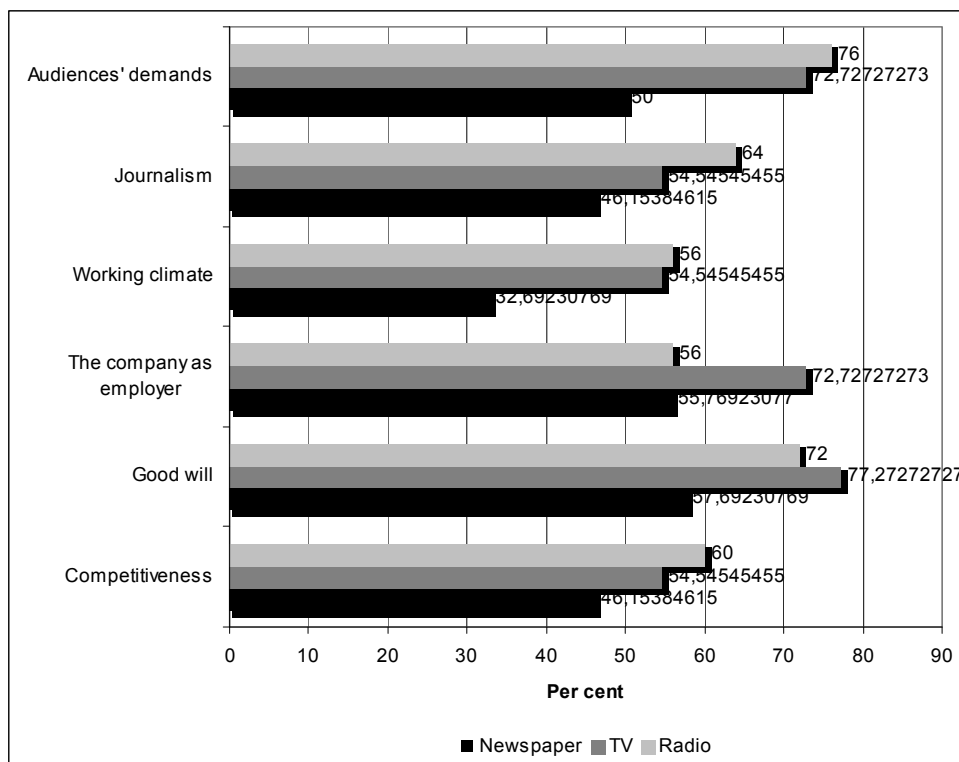


Figure 3: Fully agree that diversity improves/promotes

This is in contrast to the actual situation. Half of the respondents stated that 5 per cent or less of the news staff had foreign backgrounds – 16 per cent responded that they had none. One fourth of the companies rated the percentage between 6 and 10, and 16 per cent estimated that more than one tenth of the staff had foreign background. The rest, or 9 per cent, did not know. It is noteworthy that the largest Swedish public service companies *Sveriges Television* (SVT) and *Sveriges Radio* (SR) don't have any statistics based on of their staff's ethnicity. This makes it more complicated to measure progress, or regression for that matter.

How should this dissonance between the ideals and reality be interpreted? When the respondents were asked to state what most hampers diversity the most common replies were:

- Economic reasons. Employment freezes.
- Difficulties of recruitment. Hard to find the right people.
- Older structures, hierarchies and attitudes.

- Key persons lack competence and awareness.

Financial constraints are obviously a hindrance to promoting diversity, but the comments also reveal inefficiency in managing diversity.

The interviews

In this section I will discuss some of the key themes appearing in fourteen interviews with journalists who have foreign backgrounds working in the Stockholm region. Ten of the respondents are women and four of them men. The selection of interviewees was based on prior knowledge, identification through newspapers, radio and TV, and recommendations. The sampling aimed at reflecting different types of media experiences. The youngest was 24 years and the oldest 61 years. Nine are foreign-born and five have foreign-born parents. They or their parents come from the Nordic countries, Europe, Asia and Central America. The respondents work for newspapers, public service and commercial TV or radio broadcasting companies in the Stockholm region or are freelancers. Eight of the respondents hold a journalism qualification. The remaining six had other professional training before entering journalism. Among the younger journalists the most common entry into their first job in journalism was as a trainee.

Most of them are critical of the job their company is doing to improve diversity in hiring and in content and some are not convinced that they have equal opportunities for advancement. The journalists tend to believe that adaptation to the organizational culture is required if you want to succeed and point to the difficulties in transforming standardized professional practices. At the same time, several are aware of expectations of introducing alternative news beats and sources. Others still oppose the role as the caretakers of migration issues.

Hiring and advancement

Having an immigrant background can be both an asset and a drawback. All of the respondents are in favour of increased hiring of foreign-born journalists, but point to the multifaceted features of diversity in the newsrooms. They identified the dilemma of implementing diversity programs in a climate of economic decline and budgetary constraints. In the past years, several Swedish media companies have cut newsroom jobs or have put a hiring freeze into place. The interviewed journalists also recognized the classic problem of the "last-hired-first-fired" as an obstacle to achieving more diverse newsrooms.

There seems to be something of a generation gap between the journalists who entered the profession in the 70s and 80s and those who were taken on more recently. The more experienced professionals had to fight their way to the newsroom, while the younger ones were partly recruited because of their ethnic background. Especially the newly hired journalists express insecurity on what grounds they were employed. This can cause personal and professional dilemmas.

"Nobody says it aloud: she has got the job because she is an immigrant. But I know it is a quality that is needed in the newsroom. // I find it really hard. It's something you don't know how to handle. /.../ It's ambiguous. If I declare that they took me on because I'm an immigrant, I feel as if I reduced myself to my origin, to something less valued." (R 5)

Some respondents mentioned the intrinsic pressures and isolation in being a "token" or "panic" hire. They indicated the dilemma in having none or just one single foreign-born colleague in the workplace. Respondent # 5 continued:

"Most of the time I don't think about the fact that I have another ethnic background than my colleagues, but lately I have felt that it would be nice to have someone to seek support from."

Respondent # 1 recently quit her company because she refused to take on a token role. Her presence in the newsroom was just a way to uphold the diversity of the editorial staff, she remarked. Respondent # 7 described herself as different from the rest of the staff group:

"We look at things in totally different ways – not always but often. /.../ The average journalist was brought up in a white, Swedish middle class family. I was not. I have a working class background, my parents are foreigners and I grew up in "bad" neighbourhoods."

Another (R 6) responded in a similar vein:

"I represent a completely different part of Sweden, not only because of my ethnic background but also because I'm a woman. My way of thinking is different /.../"

Some of the interviewed journalists are not convinced that they have equal opportunities for advancement or that they are being judged by the same evaluative criteria as journalists of Swedish origin. The journalists underline the importance of supportive managers who promote diversity. The message from a majority of the respondents is that they do not feel adequately supported in their ambitions to advance in the organization.

"There is so much hypocrisy! They cry: Do you know someone, do you know someone [from a migrant background] to hire? What about me? I am here. Why don't they employ me? It doesn't matter how much I struggle. /.../ I have tried to figure out why. Is it because of

my ethnic background, is it culturally conditioned, is it because I am a woman or is it a question of my lacking the required skills?" (R 6)

"If [name of the company] is serious in their efforts, well then, hire me – a woman of the "right" age and with the "right" ethnic background. But it [the diversity policy] doesn't mean a thing." (R 7)

The journalists often feel that much of the company's diversity efforts are mere window dressing. Diversity policies are frequently regarded as empty words and many express a disappointment with their companies' performance regarding diversity issues and an impatience with the slow pace of change.

"There are so few journalists with immigrant backgrounds. // People might think it's an advantage to have a foreign background, but that's not the case. The newsrooms could be much more active in the recruitment process. The search could be much more effective. For instance, there are also a number of foreign-born journalists working for regional papers and there are journalism students who could be recruited. But today there are a few newsrooms that hire people." (R 8)

One respondent was recently promoted and had a very hard time to begin with. She felt that some of her colleagues both questioned and disregarded her.

"At the beginning I really hated it // I think that they [the colleagues] felt that I couldn't do the job. I don't think the reason was that I'm an immigrant, but because I'm a woman and that I look young to them. Ok, maybe a bit because I'm not Swedish, after all I don't speak perfect Swedish. /.../ Initially I was kind, and then I actually became angry." (R 4)

She described the support she received from her editor as crucial:

"She has been really good and encouraging. She has given me more power. // She saw the potential in me."

Openness, a willingness to listen and the capacity to give good advice, are some of the aspects that the journalists felt characterized a committed leadership. Far from all, however, have experienced the encouragement they would have desired. There isn't any support whatsoever, one briefly stated (R 7). Instead, she and others have turned to parents and families for support.

Language matters

What level of Swedish fluency is required for acceptance into a journalism position? Not having Swedish proficiency was one common response editors gave when asked which factors most restrict ethnic diversity in their workplace (Berggren 2002). However, in the telephone survey presented above, only one official mentioned insufficient language skills as a hindrance to diversity. The interviewed journalists placed less emphasis on language skills as a requirement to enter journalism and remarked that it was more a question of attitude than a genuine barrier. The respondents who came to Sweden as adults commented that the difficulties they faced in mastering the language made them lose professional confidence. Respondent # 2 looked forward to reporting in Swedish:

"I believed it would be fun, but when I listened to myself speaking Swedish with an accent I didn't feel happy. More than anything I felt shy. I thought: ugh, now I have said something wrong. I embarrassed myself in front of the Swedish people."

One respondent (R 1) experienced difficulties when she began as a journalist and had to face strong opposition because of her accent. One of her supervisors told her straight out that she was better off if her voice wasn't heard on radio and she had to fight for the right to speak with an accent.

"Nowadays I don't think about it. I know that I never can make it [the accent] disappear. I can't even speak correctly. I know that, but I can't do anything about it. So I just don't care."

To respondent # 4 language issues have been more of a social than professional impediment in interactions with the staff.

"I become silent and am afraid of saying something stupid, or that everyone is going to think that I am an idiot because they can't understand my Swedish. In certain discussions I have been totally ignored."

Respondent # 6 noted that an English accent is more readily accepted than an Arabic one and raised the question as to why one type of pronunciation is considered more prestigious than the other.

"In radio or television you rarely hear people speaking Swedish with an accent. // [T]he progress is very slow. // I realize that people must grasp what is being said // but you don't have to speak with a perfect Swedish accent to be understood." (R 5)

Practices and leadership

Diversity is not only about numbers; it is also about reporting practices and attitudes. It is not clear that increasing the number of foreign-born persons in the newsroom results in an improved coverage of migration-related issues. There are a number of barriers facing better diversity coverage, including tight deadlines, a newsroom culture that sticks to established reporting patterns and inaccurate stereotypes. These production practices are hard to transform. Hiring more journalists with foreign backgrounds may not be the answer. It doesn't make you a good journalist just because you are an immi-

grant", one (R 3) respondent noted. He was very critical of existing practices, especially those of "objective" mainstream journalism. In his view, it is necessary to establish other working methods in order to bring about better coverage. Respondent # 9 also drew attention to the role newsroom managers have in finding and building new practices:

"As a reporter you learn and are aware of what the editor appreciates, what gets you a pat on the back when you have done a good job."

Many of the respondents are aware of the expectations placed on them to introduce alternative topics and news sources just because of their migrant background. A diverse take on stories and news events is sought after and was often one reason why they were hired, but this issue is seldom discussed openly. However respondent # 14 raised the question straight away when he was employed.

"When you're an immigrant you think: do I get this gig just because I'm an immigrant and am expected to write about the suburbs and all that crap? So when I got this job I asked him [name of the editor]: did I get this gig just because you need a *blatte* [someone with immigrant background, a wog]?" (R 14)

This ambiguity helps to create guesses and assumptions. One journalist stated:

"But you have to realize that just because I have a different background it doesn't mean that I have more immigrant friends than you do. I don't come from Rosengård or Södertälje or Akalla, you see.¹ I don't have those contacts. /.../ And that scares me sometimes. What is expected of me?" (R 5)

One (R 7) added:

"You shouldn't just concentrate on the colour of someone's hair or a strange name. Each newsroom has to ask the question: what do we lack in order to /.../ obtain our objectives. In a democratic perspective the aim is hopefully to reflect society as adequately as possible in a variety of aspects."

Reporters with foreign backgrounds often oppose the role of caretakers of migrant issues.

"Maybe I have consciously avoided issues concerning refugee policies. // [I] can feel like a traitor, because you can't disregard who you are, but I hate to do things just because they are expected of me." (R 5)

Not only a homogenous editorial staff plays a role in hampering diversity and different news beats. The participants also identified the attitude of newsroom managers as essential to promoting diversity. The editors must place pressure on the reporters, respondent # 9 said.

"Editorial guidelines are necessary: this is what we consider good journalism in this field. It is of vital importance as to how they are formulated. If they consist of general advice like we need to have more immigrants in the paper, they are useless. You can't follow those."

Therefore editorial rules need to be specific and precise, he remarked and gave an example of a recent newsroom discussion.

"What words shall we use when we write about God? When you write about Muslims, Allah is often used when it is uncalled for. It is the same word as Christians use, it just means God but in Arabic." (R 9)

The debate led to guidelines that the editor formulated and mailed to the news staff. Without detailed recommendations you can't follow up on how well reporters or departments live up to the goals, he argued and added that managers must be prepared to fight to fulfil the goals.

At the managerial level ethnic diversity is extremely sparse. Media researcher Edward Pease and his research group found that having a minority executive in a decision-making capacity could make a significant difference in how American news organizations dealt with diversity issues (Pease, Smith & Subervi 2001: 6). Even if there are reporters who have foreign backgrounds the gatekeepers are still male, white journalists, one critic said (respondent # 7). A general view among the participants is that the reporting practices are hard to change.

"It's tremendously tough because the conventions are so fixed. You have reporters who have been in the newsroom for 45 years and you have editors who have been working for a long time and who the staff respect. /.../ I don't think it's impossible. You have to identify the key persons, those with the most power and try to persuade them." (R 5)

Respondent # 1 felt that Swedish reporters feared asking questions that made them look ignorant or prejudiced. At the same time, they neglected their duties when they automatically let a reporter from an immigrant background cover migration issues, she argued.

"Go ahead, take care of this problem so that we don't have to deal with it. That's what they imply." (R 1)

1. Areas with large immigrant populations.

Representation

Nearly all of the journalists who work for radio and television companies have received racist mail and/or threats from the audience because of their foreign background or their accent.

"There were many that didn't like me and complained a great deal. /.../ A lot of letters were really mean. /.../ It was strange that people could be that angry." (R 4)

Respondent # 5 said:

"Anyone with a foreign name gets this kind of mail. // It made me very sad. Why should I receive mail like this? I am just doing my job."

Added another:

"I receive a huge amount of threats just because I look the way I do." (R 7)

Despite the threats none of them want to give up their careers as journalists. But there is another side of what their faces and/or the names represent. Especially the younger journalists view themselves as representatives of other people with a migrant background and this involves a special sense of responsibility. Respondent # 14 described himself as an ambassador.

"Somewhere in the back of my head I have the idea that I don't just represent myself as an individual, but my whole group, my whole community. My aim, right from the start, was to show that we are more than *blattar* [wogs], we are human beings, we are multifaceted, and we enjoy a lot of different things."

Respondent # 8 felt that he made a statement by being visible.

"I want to reach many people and want those who have migrant backgrounds to feel included. There is an extra dimension to what my face and name signal and that is important for [company's name]. So in that respect I feel responsible, because nobody tells me to do it. /.../ Viewers with an Arabic background, for instance, can identify themselves in a different way. And then I hope that others, the Swedes, think that I am doing a good job."

This visibility has helped him to gain confidence and recognition among immigrant groups. Several other participants have received positive reactions from their audience and their readers. One (R 5) remarked:

"I am full of pride with what my face represents // People with migrant backgrounds write to me and they feel proud, young people contact me and wonder how I entered journalism. Those things make me very happy."

Three approaches to diversity

In this section I will present three media companies' motivation in their concerns about diversity issues and their attitudes towards business diversity goals. Is the emphasis on better business, better journalism or both? The case studies represent different types of companies that operate on the Stockholm media market and include interviews with managers of three Swedish news organizations, namely *Sdra Sidan*, *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Sveriges Radio*.

Sdra Sidan

The newspaper *Sdra Sidan* (*On the South Side*) started in 2006 and is published by Medborgarpress Stockholm AB. It is a small bi-monthly free sheet distributed to all households in several southern suburbs of Stockholm, with a circulation of 54,000 and a staff of three. It was launched out of the discontent with the misrepresentation of minority groups in mainstream media. It can be described as a primarily mission-driven paper emphasizing the social responsibility function of journalism, claiming an active role for journalism, and putting public journalism into practice.

The founder of *Sdra Sidan*, Rouzbeh Djalai and the co-editor Petter Beckman, want to pursue alternative journalistic practices in order to reach new audiences by addressing counter-issues, that is news issues not found in the agendas of the mainstream media. The paper focuses on the relationships between different ethnic groups in the host country and on issues of communicative rights in multi-ethnic societies. It was born partly out of Rouzbeh Djalai's personal experiences as an inhabitant of one of the southern suburbs of Stockholm and his frustration with the mainstream media representations of his neighbourhood. It has no diversity program, but the entire operation can be regarded as such. In much of the general media reporting the suburban areas are often connected to social problems, crime and violence. Rouzbeh Djalai explained:

"You read *Dagens Nyheter*¹ or some other large newspaper and feel a bit set aside. This is not my world, it's somebody else's world. You see, I'm not included in their picture of the public and when I exist it's only when something dreadful has happened. /.../ One might think

1. *Dagens Nyheter* is Sweden's second largest daily newspaper and is published in Stockholm.

that the reporting has improved but in the end nothing much has happened."

To his mind this kind of negative reporting is intrinsic to the shared news values of mainstream journalism. This view is supported by media researcher Simon Cottle (2000; 2007). Cottle has shown that the identification of a shared professional ideology of objectivity and the often internalized acceptance of shared news values reinforce a tendency towards the standardized nature of news. As Shohat and Stam (1994) have argued there is a powerful blend of media commercial interests and the taken-for-granted cultural assumptions of media professionals that promote the reproduction of dominant cultural and political norms. This 'professionalism' can be seen as influential to the problematic nature of journalists' reporting on multicultural issues. In the reporting journalists follow known patterns, Djalaie added.

"Most journalists assume that this is an area full of problems that society must solve, not that the people living here are fully capable of finding ways out on their own. // If *Dagens Nyheter* reports something about Tensta, then the team can't spend an entire day there.¹ So they have to identify the key persons to talk to and those with features that fit into their own worldview."

Sdra Sidan has a highly targeted audience and Djalaie's primary concern is not to change the general media representation of the suburbs, but to instead give inhabitants of the local community the possibilities of describing their own daily lives, creating a forum for discussion and thereby contributing to a better society. According to Djalaie this can't be achieved as long as you cling to traditional reporting codes for journalists or to established news values. Therefore the differences in working methods are what most separate *Sdra Sidan* from mainstream media. His description of *Sdra Sidan* is that of a solution-oriented paper, in contrast to most news medias' focus on problems. Among other things *Sdra Sidan* has organized meetings on important local public issues.

"It is very much about being able to join in the public debate, about being listened to and being taken seriously // This is not an ordinary newspaper. You could say that it's a form of social project /.../ When we meet people we talk about how problems can be tackled. And sometimes we take the initiative of creating solutions."

More than anything it is about time, he concluded.

"I can be in the town square for two hours and just chat with people, it doesn't even have to result in an article. /.../ I don't approach people with a specific question that I want people to answer yes or no to."

The editors have close contact with the inhabitants and the paper has a readership panel that meets once a month. Djalaie stressed the value of finding out how well the paper meets the needs of the readers and of getting responses to their journalistic product. But the panel is also a platform for market research. Djalaie believes that news organizations need to create a different sort of relationship with the public, one that reexamines the journalists' role to sources and to readers, and changes conventions about what is news and how it is covered.

This type of journalism works, not only in areas where there are social problems, but everywhere.

Svenska Dagbladet

Svenska Dagbladet is owned by the Norwegian media conglomerate Schibsted and is Sweden's fifth largest newspapers with a circulation of 197,800 copies.² In recent years the newspaper has experienced a severe crisis and has undergone considerable changes, including staff cuts and editorial shifts. Whereas most newspapers have shown a decline in their circulation for the past few years, the *Svenska Dagbladet* has noted an increase. The primary target group of *Svenska Dagbladet* consists of inquisitive, well-educated people in the Stockholm area and is primarily a subscription-based newspaper.³

In 2005 it introduced a new diversity program that includes strategies for increasing the employment of foreign-born journalists and the visibility of minority groups in the paper, with the ideal of parity with the community it serves. The aim was not to reach new readers outside the target group, editor-in-chief Mats-Eric Nilsson explained.⁴

"We try to reach people with migrant backgrounds in our defined target group. So our goal is that the portion of readers from migrant backgrounds should correspond to the share that they hold in our target group."

The program can be viewed as part of the newspaper's marketing efforts to increase their circulation regarding its core readership. In other words, the metropolitan daily *Svenska Dagbladet* is not interested in the readers of the suburban newspaper *Sdra Sidan*.

During the last decade, as the media industry has become more challenging for daily newspapers and many of them have adopted a stronger market orientation. Critics remark that the emphasis on marketing is overshadowing journalism's social responsibility function. Mats-Eric Nilsson reasons that making the paper a stronger journalistic product is a part of the busi-

1. Southern suburb of Stockholm.
2. Statistics for January 2009, Tidningsstatistik AB, www.ts.se. "Månadsupplaga SvD" (accessed May 9, 2009).
3. *Svenska Dagbladet*: www.svd.se. "Om SvD" (accessed May 9, 2009).
4. Interview conducted by undergraduate student Karolina Schützer in April 2008.

ness diversity goals put forth by *Svenska Dagbladet*. The newsroom gives more attention to perceiving reader interests of the target group. This has brought changes to the news-making process. The diversity program is goal-oriented and the results are followed up regularly. The point is simple; the paper must be relevant to people born in other countries than Sweden and that can't be achieved if the paper is too "Swedish". That is a journalistic goal as well as a commercial one.

"We took the eight largest immigrant groups as a starting point and looked at how they are represented in the paper."

The representation is evaluated monthly and is based on the visibility of the defined groups in the main picture of the front page and in the most important news pictures. The goal expressed is that 16 percent of the persons in the pictures should be identified as belonging to some of the big eight on the basis of the names of the persons in the pictures. This share corresponds to the portion they hold in the population of Stockholm. Not all of the departments are equally successful in meeting these goals. The news and business departments have performed well, whereas others lag behind.

"Our aim is to broaden the representation of non-Swedish persons and to report about them as company owners, athletes // that is, in normal contexts."

The representation of journalists with migrant backgrounds in the newsroom is a more complicated but just as important effort, Nilsson continued. In the recruiting process he considers a migrant background to be a form of competence that can be valuable to the company. Again, the big eight is a tool in the selection process.

"For instance, we don't have anyone with Iranian background on our staff, but Iranians are a large immigrant group in Sweden /.../ So you must look at our newsroom, in what fields do we lack competence? It is an important factor when we hire somebody, but it should not be seen as establishing quotas /.../ The problem is that we can hire so few, that is what hinders us the most."

Nilsson added a self-critical remark that the paper can look for journalists in a more active and strategic manner instead of only choosing from the people who have sent in applications. *Svenska Dagbladet* also has a commercial interest in being able to show the readers that there are reporters who have migrant backgrounds. Their visibility is in fact a way to advertise the paper, Nilsson pointed out. Therefore he foresees a development where media companies will recruit more journalists with migrant backgrounds and will give them more advanced positions in the organizations.

There are journalistic reasons but also clear commercial ones. Otherwise you are disregarding your audience.

Sveriges Radio

Sveriges Radio (SR) is the largest public service radio company in Sweden and is financed by a compulsory licence fee. Since commercial radio broadcasting channels first began operating in the early 90s public service radio's share of daily listeners of has steadily declined from 70 per cent to less than 50 per cent of the population. In 2007 a major reorganization of SR was implemented. The change included staff cuts and reductions in budgets. The shift also had an impact on SR's diversity policy, involving a shift from niche programmes, i.e. *Brytpunkten* (*Breaking Point*) to a general diversity within all programming. Commercial competitors have placed pressure on the company's profile and critics remark that public broadcasting more and more resembles commercial media.

The underlying principles of the broadcasting licence are formulated in the Radio and Television Act. The act stipulates certain fundamental rules regarding the assertion of democratic values and the principle of equality. Moreover, SR's broadcasting licence requires the company to provide a diverse array of programming reflecting the various cultures present in Sweden. The company's diversity policy states that Sweden is a multicultural society. Therefore, overall programming aims at appealing to all Swedes, wherever they live and regardless of their age, gender, and cultural background. The policy also states that diversity should be a natural part of all of the company's programming. Diversity should be seen as including ethnicity, disability, age, faith, sexuality, class, political affiliation and regional differences. SR does not support hand-selecting their staff. Job advertisements must be formulated so as to attract persons of different ethnic origins and SR's policy for cultural diversity is to be mentioned.

Anne Sseruwagi is former editor-in-chief of Sweden's International Radio and now holds a key position in implementing SR's diversity policies. Her impression is that the attitudes towards diversity within media institutions have changed considerably in the past few years.

"For a number of years we have been following a systematic diversity strategy and to my mind SR has been fairly successful. // I believe you can notice it when you listen to our programs. Diversity has become more of a natural part of our programming and is not stressed in the way it used to be. Nowadays diversity is more often embedded into the processes of programme making and nobody makes a big thing about it."

The company's general diversity strategy is detailed in a number of diversity plans and directives. They are part of the company's planning cycle and are taken into account throughout the entire hierarchy. All channels and editorial departments have diversity plans of their own, Sseruwagi explained. The plans include monitoring of journalistic diversity goals.

"Many desks monitor diversity from a gender perspective. It is easy to keep track of men and women but how do you handle other types of diversity? It's not self-evident how to monitor disability or ethnicity."

Diversity promotes the journalistic product, Sseruwagi stated, and mentioned the role of news managers.

"Managers need to be aware of the importance of diversity and they must put pressure on the staff, otherwise diversity is easily forgotten // If you don't fulfil the diversity goals it should have consequences, no increase in wages, for instance."

In a situation where the public service companies are challenged and put under pressure by their commercial competitors, SR's diversity strategy can prove to be of vital importance to the company, Sseruwagi claimed.

"We need to be role models in this field. It's imperative that we reach a variety of listeners and that we are able to equalize access to information, and in that way maintain a democratic function."

Sseruwagi also pointed to the difficulties of increasing or even maintaining the diversity of the editorial staff. She also pointed out the lack of diversity at the managerial level as a serious dilemma.

"We must downsize. Therefore it's even more important that the few recruitments that we make are part of the company's strategic considerations /.../ The persons that we hire today are the company's future key persons."

To sum up, to all three organizations diversity has both a journalistic and a market value. All three need to attract readers/listeners among migrant groups from both a moral and a market perspective. Journalistic improvements and financial necessity seem to be the twin motives of enhancing diversity in the organizations, but in different proportions.

The demographic changes of Sweden raise questions about the relationship between media and citizens. *Sdra Sidan's* target group is not primarily *Svenska Dagbladet's* and vice versa. The concern of *Sveriges Radio* is, however, to reach everybody. *SR* is required to serve the public interest; diversity is embedded in the function of public service.

Sdra Sidan's perception of the audience obviously differs from *Svenska Dagbladet's*. One could argue that Rouzbeh Djalai's view of the reader in fact is part of his self-image as a journalist and his role in society. To him, citizen activism can help produce media that are more responsive to the needs of citizens in a diverse democratic society. Communicating with members of the audience is what journalism is all about, to Djalai. This is a view that generally is not included in the professional identity of journalists in Sweden. It is argued that the discussion and therefore the problematization of responsibilities of news media organizations in Sweden regarding diversity potentially affect the core values of the occupational ideology of journalism. But journalism is a slow-moving and tradition-bound profession.

Conclusion

The situation of journalists with foreign backgrounds raises the question of power relations on the editorial staff. It is close at hand to draw parallels to the strategies by which women deal with male-dominated newsrooms. According to Liesbet van Zoonen, they can either choose to be "one of the girls" or "one of the boys." To become one of the boys, women need to adjust to the unwritten laws, norms and expectations that exist in a masculine environment in order to be accepted as an equal and a "real journalist" (van Zoonen 1998). Everett Stonequist's thoughts on marginalization (Stonequist 1937/1965) can easily be linked to the strategies that journalists with foreign backgrounds make use of to cope with their situation in the newsrooms. According to Stonequist the marginal man belongs at the same time to two (or more) cultures and experiencing exclusion, in both the new and the old culture. In these worlds one is often dominant over the other. This dual membership will lead to confusion, internal conflict and ambivalence of the individual. "He will, in fact, be a kind of dual personality" (Stonequist 1937/1965: 4). Several of the interviewees indicate that adapting to current standards is needed to gain acceptance and to be able to advance in the organization. They express the dilemma and even conflict between the expectations to be someone different, introducing alternative news beats and yet to be normal, adhering to mainstream newsroom practises. More aggressive market strategies aiming at reaching larger audiences also enforce assimilationist tendencies.

Often newsroom diversity programs have focused on hiring to create diverse content. Numbers alone are not the entire story. To change the situation an increased recruitment of journalists of minority backgrounds will not be enough, nor will well-intentioned diversity policies. Newsroom cultures include a variety of codes that a journalist with a foreign background and with the determination to gain acceptance in the workplace do not question. They are confronted with several factors that make it difficult or impossible to get news beats concerning minority or migration issues accepted. Several of the journalists that I interviewed said that they refrained from proposing such news stories. Clint Wilson comment that established perspective in media prevents change towards cultural pluralism in the content. He takes the situation of black journalists who worked in "white" editorial in USA as an example: "Their survival on the job depends upon how well they conform to newsroom policy expectations and how they 'fit in' with fellow workers" (Wilson 2000: 97).

Clint Wilson and Félix Gutiérrez identify five developmental phases in the news about ethnic minorities: (1) exclusionary,

(2) threatening issue, (3) confrontation, (4) stereotypical selection and (5) integrated coverage (Wilson & Gutiérrez 1985: 135 ff). Twenty-five years later the last stage is in large part a vision not yet realized. It is characterized by a media coverage based on a "we" which includes all citizens. To accomplish that objective, news professionals need to redefine news values and the definition of in and out groups. This provides a clear challenge for newsrooms to transform standardized professional practices and newsroom cultures.

My future research will attempt to better understand the relationships between organizational structures, leadership, newsroom climate, ethnic diversity and news content. The findings of *The News and Race Models of Excellence Project* indicate a correlation between management, diversity efforts in hiring and content, newsroom attitudes on diversity and the actual content of their news products (Pease, Smith & Subervi 2001). Charles Westin and his research group, who analyzed diversity practices in six Swedish companies, reason that diversity is harder to bring about in authoritarian and rigid organizations. Westin believes that a dynamic and democratic leadership is of central importance for positive consequences of diversity to emerge and to promote an open atmosphere in the workplace (Westin 2001: 183-184). This coincides with what media researcher Ingrid Stlund (1994) found was characteristic of creative newsrooms. One could assume that more innovative newsrooms would be more open to pluralism and more likely to invest in more diverse kinds of reporting practices and recruitment. The current situation is clearly unsatisfying. Understanding the organizational structures and cultures can also help in understanding why change does not take place.

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