

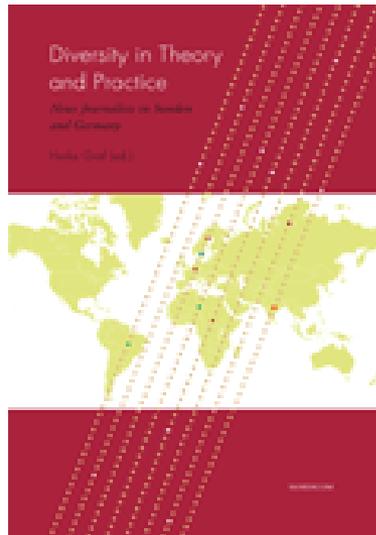
Examining Ethnicity in German and Swedish Newsrooms

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Outline

- Research project
- Normative or non-normative approaches on media and diversity?
- Attitudes towards diversity in Swedish news media
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 - Language Matters
 - Career
 - Does a migrant background make a difference?
- Conclusions



How do journalists with migrant backgrounds experience their working conditions, career possibilities, and their possibilities of influencing media coverage? How does ethnic diversity contribute to a changed media coverage?

Normative or non-normative approaches on media and diversity?

Normative approach

- How **should** the media behave: Integration function of media
 - Media coverage mirroring the ideal of multicultural societies,
 - Staff representing different ethnic cultures within newsrooms
- Media research: exploring media's fulfillment of this role or not

Descriptive approach

- How **do** the media behave: observation-related approach
- Starting point is basically empirical: exploring different realities of a complex media world

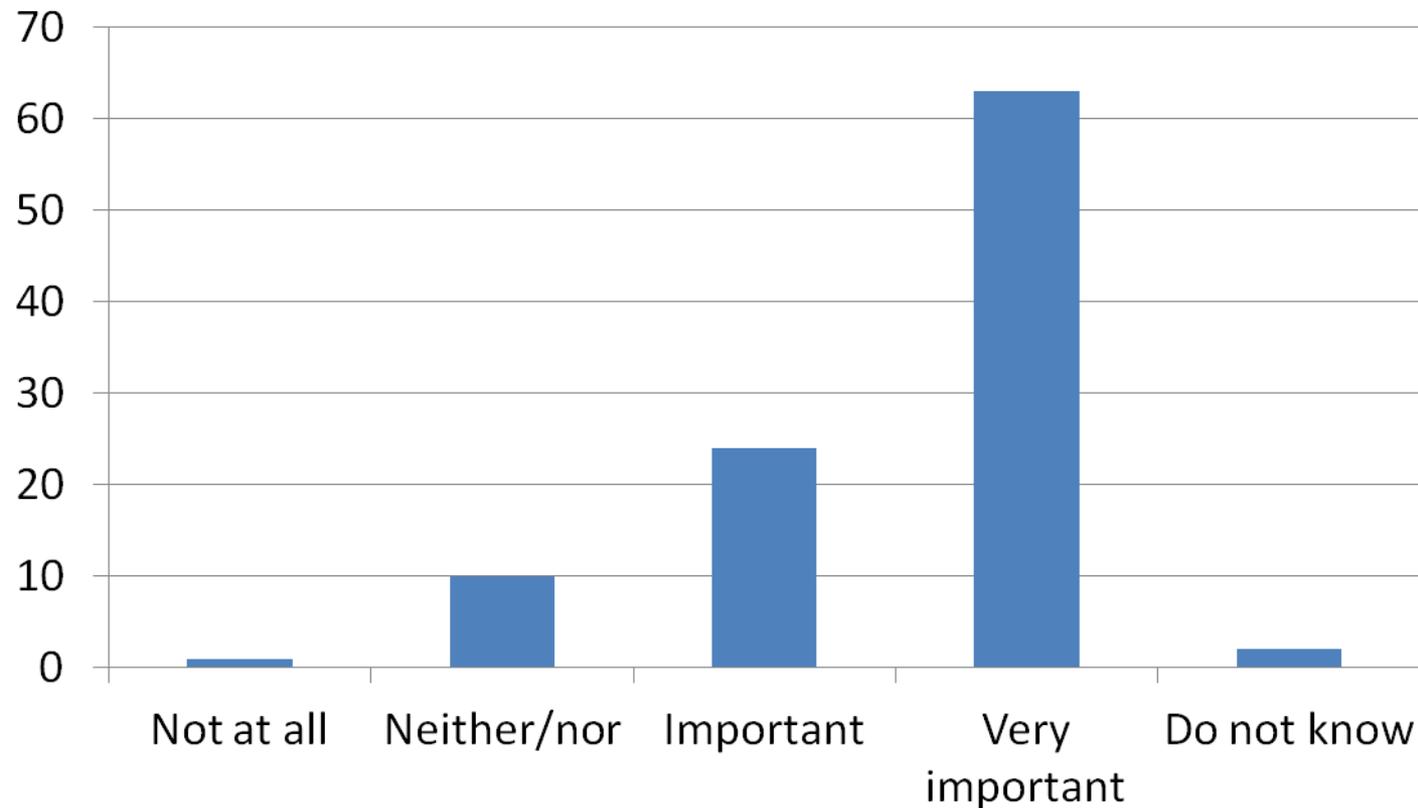
Media and integration discourse

- Germany:
 - National Integration Plan by the German Government from 2007
 - The private initiative of the Charter of Diversity from 2006
- Sweden:
 - Some Swedish media organizations have introduced documented diversity plans
 - Charter of Diversity from 2010

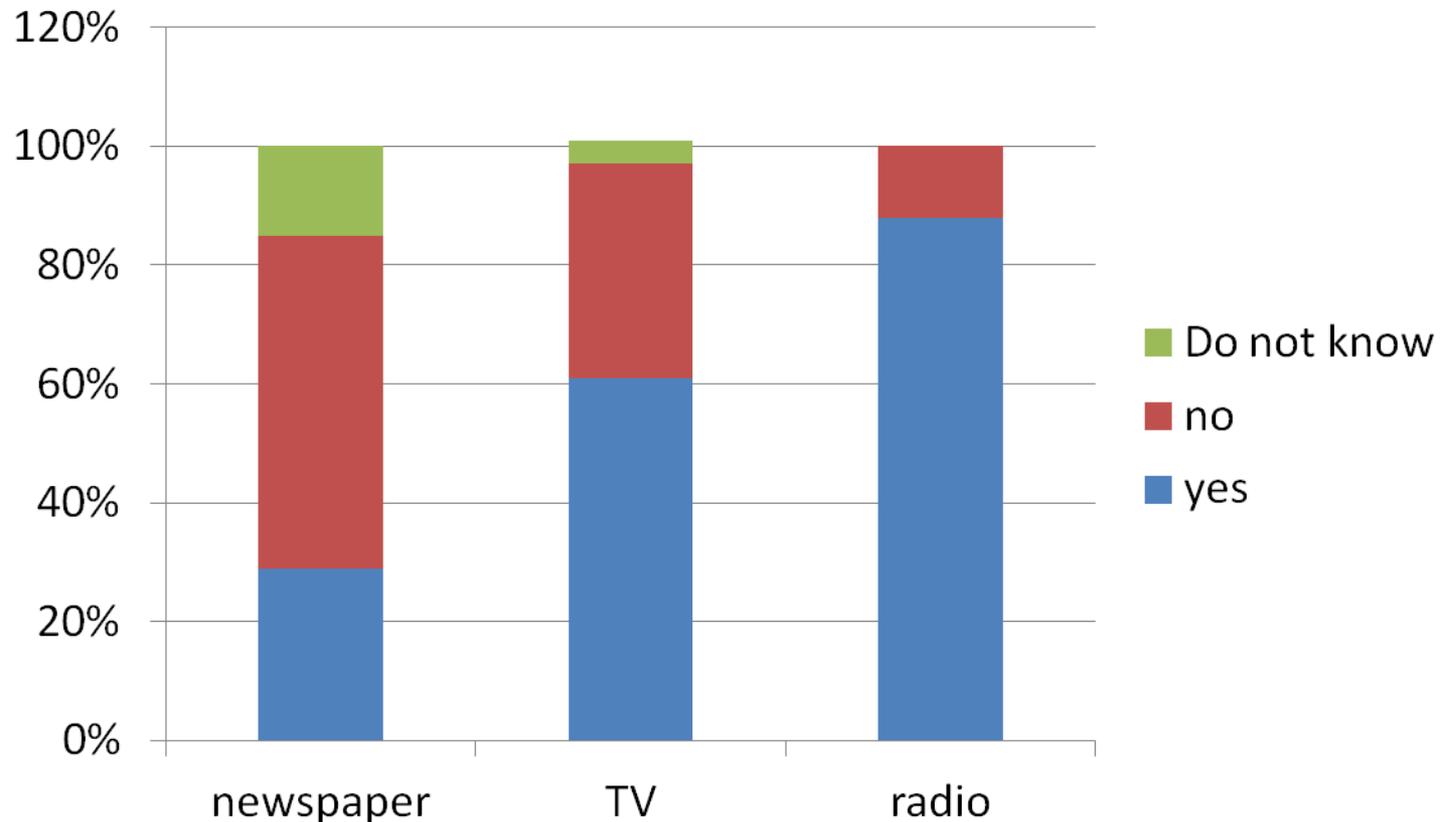
Attitudes towards diversity in Swedish news media

- Telephone survey in May and June of 2008
- 103 organizations: newspapers, radio, and TV

How important do you consider it to be to actively work with diversity issues in media companies?



Has your company a written plan for how one should work on diversity?



Journalists with migrant backgrounds

- Sweden:
 - 5.9 percent of the journalists are foreign-born, only 2 percent were born in a non-European country (Statistics Sweden 2008)
- Germany:
 - About 2-3 percent of journalists have a migrant background (Ouaj 1999: 42)
 - Only 1.2 percent of all print journalists
 - journalists are younger (most of them between 26-35), quite often from working-class families, most of them are female, and like the average German media worker have a university degree (Geissler & Enders et al. 2009: 100)

Interview results

How does ethnicity function in the context of journalistic production?

- Themes:
 - recruitment
 - the coverage of topics
 - issues of language
 - careers
 - impact on reporting
- Perspective of inclusion/exclusion: a person's general participation, or nonparticipation, in the communication of media organizations

Recruitment

- 1) a migrant background is an advantage,
- 2) a migrant background is a disadvantage,
- 3) a migrant background is not decisive for employment opportunities



Dunja Hayali: Of course my qualifications were the most important criterion, but there's no denying my immigrant background was an added plus in bagging the job. (Phalnikar 2007)

I am the token Turk at [name of the TV station]. I was employed against the will of my section head. It came entirely from above. (Man, TV, R5)

*When I was employed, it was of course my fear that I would fill a foreigner quota. I did not want to do that, actually. For that reason I asked the bosses: Look, very honestly, was I employed because of the foreigner quota? No, they said, it was really because of your professional qualifications.
(Woman, radio, R8)*

It was like that at the meetings, when it came to assignments: I put my hands up three times, and no-one else did that. Even so, I did not get the job even if no-one else was interested in it.[...]

HG: Was this because of your migrant background?

*Of course. Yes, of course. More than anything, yes.
(Woman, radio, R 8)*

When I started in TV, I was told that I had better leave [...]. 'We prefer blondes'. Of course they did not say it to my face. That happened only once. During the casting – off the record – someone recommended that I become an author, behind the camera. The time is not yet ripe for such exotic 'cases' as me. (Woman, TV/ radio, R6)

Coverage of Topics

I was not explicitly recruited because of my ethnic background, but implicitly it did play a role. If there is a certain topic that relates to my background, I am always addressed. (Man, press editor, R10)

In the early 90s, when I began working as a journalist, the expectation was: you are [nationality], please treat this topic. I did not accept it. I always tried to get topics that I liked. I did not succeed, for the staff did not believe that I also could deal with other than [nation] topics. After having been turned down 30 times, you eventually do what is expected of you. (Man, radio, R1).

I know the weak points of my community, [...] or which topics are tricky. I know the rights and also the problems of the migrants from my own experience. I already know how to treat the topic. [...] I can handle it better than my German colleague. (Woman, radio, R4)



Ferda Ataman

To be a freelance journalist with a migrant background is not at all bad. If I offer a story to an editorial staff about an integration topic that fits my knowledge about Turkey, I sell it immediately. It is automatically assumed that I have higher intercultural competence. (Ataman 2007)

Language Matters: Dealing with Accented Speech

- Excluding mechanisms: depending on distinctions between high-prestige and low-prestige cultures
- Speaking with accent: hindrance to advancement
- *If an individual with an accent says, ‘well, I work in German media and can be heard on radio’, it raises a few eyebrows. All are surprised and that slows me down (Woman, radio, R8)*
- *To be a visible migrant journalist is one thing, to be an audible migrant journalist is, however, something entirely different. [...] There will never be an anchorwoman with an accent. (Woman, radio, R8)*

Career

- Migrant background as determining factor:
- *I have already resigned myself to not having a splendid career as a result of my non-German origin. Every single attempt to start a career would involve my accepting ideological conditions that I am not willing to accept. It is different, however, for my younger colleagues, those who are born and grew up in Germany. They have better promotion prospects. It is because they are rather ready to bow to the demands from their colleagues, and that they are already shaped by the German education system. (Man, press/radio, R 16).*

When the [name of the broadcasting station] refused several times to send me [to name of the city] as a correspondent, I thought I was unsuitable because I had too little distance to the topics, due to my ethnic background. At the time I thought so. But now I do not believe in that explanation. It has to do with the internal career ladder, and it was not my turn. (Man, radio/TV, R3)

I could not get ahead in TV, and this was 99.9 % due to the boss. The colleagues got the order from him not to promote me. This I was told years later, over a glass of wine. There were two aspects that came together: being a woman – the boss had certain problems with women – and being a foreigner. I would have loved to work in TV. But it was not my fault that it did not work. (Woman, radio, R8)

Presently, my career has come to somewhat of a halt. It is always said that more immigrants should work in the media. The situation is like this: there is more demand for people in front of the cameras than in executive positions. We have not come so far yet. But I hope I will experience that. [...]. That people have enough confidence that somebody with twenty-five years of experience in journalism or fifteen years of management experience can also move on to a higher position. (Man, radio, R1)

Does a Migrant Background Make a Difference?

- *Well, I want to change the coverage style of migrants. Sometimes the reports in the German media are very biased, which upsets me. (Woman, radio, R 4)*
- *My concern is writing more complex stories [...] We cannot reduce it to a Turk problem. (Woman, press, R 15)*
- *Many second and third generation immigrants say today: 'I want go back and I am proud to be [Nationality] and my heimat is there'. That is because of the discrimination they have experienced here. They hope that it is at least better in their country of origin. Therefore, I would like to encourage them to stay here by airing success stories. (Woman, press, R 9)*

“I have an extensive contact net that my colleagues only stand to gain from” (woman, press R13).

*Since I have this focus on migrant communities, I contribute to a reflection on this issue within the editorial staff [...].
Meanwhile, it also has an impact on my colleagues. (Woman, press, R 13)*

*In the morning most of the chief editors I work for drive out of their basement garage or of their gardens into the basement garage of their publishing houses. And in the evening they go back home. They do not know any Kreuzberg, have not even eaten kebab. Probably, I am the only Turk they know.
(Woman, press, R 15)*

Yesterday, I got a call from a friend [...]. I have not heard from him for more than 10 years. He said: 'I saw you on TV. My parents always watch your news show.' And I realized what I want, I also want to address the people who have immigrated. Here, I have an important function. (Man, TV, R 5)

In the meantime, I have the moral obligation, as somebody who has succeeded, to be a good example. [...] The people see me and hear my stories and cannot believe then, [...] that I come from an illiterate family. (Woman, press, R15)

Conclusions

Migrant background is seen as:

- An advantage and part of one's competence
- An advantage yet implying a lack of competence
- A disadvantage and implying a lack of competence
- Not making any difference

Ethnicity generates difference according to qualifications

- If a different ethnic background is simply read as being less competent, then multicultural society faces a serious problem.