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**Diversity in British, Swedish, and German Newsrooms: Problem Awareness,
Measures, and Achievements**

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Abstract

A core tenet of journalism is to contribute toward a functioning and healthy public sphere by ensuring transparency over issues and perspectives from different segments of society. However, it has become increasingly doubtful whether the news media can reflect the true diversity of society while lacking internal diversity in their newsrooms. In our study of three European countries (Germany, Sweden, and the UK), we assess how news organizations cope with the challenges of achieving diversity among their editorial staff and fostering a diversity-sensitive newsroom culture. Drawing on semi-standardized interviews with editors-in-chief and managing editors at 18 outlets, our analysis systematically regards different levels of influence following the model by Shoemaker and Reese (2014). We aim at identifying issues and obstacles that news organizations need to overcome as well as strategies they can adopt to improve diversity in their newsrooms. Our results stress the importance of (1) personal commitment of people in leading positions, (2) close monitoring as a base for strategic management, (3) acknowledgment and promotion of different perspectives in daily newsroom routines, and (4) the reflection and addressing of structural inequalities inside and outside the organization.

Keywords

Newsroom diversity, European journalism, comparative research, expert interviews, diversity management, Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Introduction

In democracies or political systems that rest on democratic legitimacy, the media play a crucial role in reflecting the inputs of elites and people to the public sphere. To ensure a healthy and functioning public sphere in which political opinion formation and decision making can take place, the news and journalism must include a various topics and perspectives and reflect the diversity and pluralism of society (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002). However, it is increasingly being discussed whether journalism can cover such varying perspectives when journalists are a relatively homogeneous group with similar social backgrounds and little insights into other parts of society (Awad-Cherit, 2008b; Pritchard & Stonbely, 2016; Turner, 2014). Within the news industry, there is a growing level of awareness regarding this discrepancy. The debate about the role of journalism in acknowledging and representing the diversity of society intensified after several events occurred where journalists had predicted developments that differed vastly from the actual results (e.g., the election of Donald Trump in the US as well as the Brexit referendum). The issue gained further attention amid a broader recognition in the wake of international protests on structural racism and discrimination in 2020.

However, past research also indicates that having people with different backgrounds among the editorial staff does not automatically result in more diverse media content and better representation (Awad-Cherit, 2008b; Breed, 1955; Edström, 2017; Schwenk, 2006). Therefore, the question that need to be asked must address two distinct aspects: (1) Which strategies do media companies apply to achieve diversity of people and perspectives within their newsrooms, and (2) what is necessary to shape a climate in which diversity can be experienced in the daily editorial routine? We are particularly interested in sorting out such factors that allow people to introduce their perspectives, enabling a more diversity-sensitive content.

Addressing these questions, this paper examines how media companies in three European countries (Germany, Sweden, and the UK) understand and approach the newsroom diversity issue in terms of gender, class, and ethnic background. Drawing insights from an analysis of 18 interviews with editors-in-chief and managing editors, we intend to contribute to the understanding of how media production processes determine the framework of content structure.

Linking editorial staff diversity to content diversity

We can conclude from earlier research that the assumption—which has also been frequently heard in public debate—of more diversity in editorial staff leading to more variety in media content seems to be contested. It has been indicated that a higher degree of staff diversity can even lead to increased homogenization at the content level. Due to journalistic professionalization and a strive for objectivity, certain differences (e.g., cultural, religious, or ethnic differences) may be pushed back. Additionally, economic considerations (reaching the broadest possible audiences) may override democratic concerns of participation (Awad-Cherit, 2008). Breed (1955) provides a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon of leveling differences in the perspectives and experiences of journalists with the help of his theory of social control in the newsroom. By and large, he argues that novices are automatically (but not explicitly) socialized into the rules and routines of the newsroom. They quickly learn what they are expected to do and say, while internalizing these rules. This spells out a problem for increasing diversity: If the working conditions do not leave much room for deviation from standard routines and norms, it may be especially frustrating for people with diverse backgrounds to fit in, get heard, and contribute, which can lead to difficulties not only in acquiring but also in retaining diverse staff. McGill (2000), for example, reports in his study of US newsrooms that journalists of color are more likely to leave their media organizations due to unfavorable working conditions and poor promotion opportunities. Besides, prejudices and stereotypes rooted in society also do not stop at newsrooms and affect internal structures, working conditions, and individual careers. For example, in her study of German journalists Schwenk (2006) not only notes an apparent increase in the proportion of women in newsrooms compared to earlier findings, but also a significantly higher qualification level among women. However, women are more often assigned to so-called soft news sections despite their interests and qualification. In addition, less often do they reach positions in which they have the power to participate in editorial decision making.

We take the findings of earlier research as a starting point for our considerations on how diversity in newsrooms can be achieved as well as *lived out*. We propose a systematic approach by applying the *Hierarchical Influence Model* developed by Shoemaker and Reese (2014). This heuristic (rather than theoretical) model is originally designed to facilitate the analysis of different dimensions that influence news content. The model consists of five levels of analysis that are seen as shaping media content: (1) the social system level (national and cultural context, ideological forces, and systemic patterns); (2) the social institutions level (the structure of media

organizations as social institutions); (3) the organizational level (overarching concepts that shape routines, e.g., the organizational structures and policies); (4) the routine level (organizational constraints in which the individual operates); and (5) the individual level (individual characteristics of the communicator).

Although the model attempts to find explanations for the shaping of media content, we will not use it to directly investigate the media content. Instead, we study the production side via the assessments and reflections of leading people in newsrooms to learn about the efforts made by different media companies in the respective context in which they operate. We apply the model to structure our analysis and determine how the conditions for (or obstacles to) newsroom diversity on every level can influence the state of editorial staff diversity as well as the opportunities to experience diversity in daily editorial work as a presumed precondition for different perspectives to find their way into media content and public debates.

On the *social system level*, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) regard the macro level and distinguish between different subsystems: the ideological, economic, political, and cultural subsystems. Ferree et al. (2002), for instance, demonstrate the importance of this system level for the inclusion of different voices and perspectives in public discourse by comparing abortion discourses in the US and Germany. Several aspects of this study are especially relevant in assessing further influences of the social system level on diversity in the media, including the overall ideological level (e.g., toward the role of the state and governmental interventions, the capitalist economic order, and the acceptance of inequality in society) and the historical constellations of a country as an immigration country. Such factors along with a country's legislation on equality and discrimination may influence the overall level of a society's openness and acceptance toward diversity and also determine structural inequalities, which limit fairness and equality of opportunity, e.g., structural racism or sexism (Edström, 2017; Schwenk, 2006), as well as access to higher education and educational advancement (Horn, 2012; Röben, 2010).

On the level of *social institutions*, it is essential to consider the relationships of the media with other institutional centers of control and influence in society. For example, the political sphere determines the laws that affect the media as well as the economic system in which the media operate. In general, media organizations are commercial entities that—within the capitalist systems of modern democracies—work for profit through reach and subscriptions as well as ad sales. While public broadcasters may be an exception to this generalization, they also frequently depend on advertising revenues and operate as market participants in a competitive media environment. The competitiveness of media markets may be an essential aspect of

diversity. This can go in two directions: either by facilitating more diversity in a market with high competition ("marketplace of ideas") wherein different media outlets cover different perspectives, or by enabling a somewhat monopolized media market with an organization that encompasses everyone (Sehl, Simon, & Schroeder, 2020; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). How media outlets connect with other social institutions also depends on their economic logic, which has an indirect influence on the inclusiveness of the mediated debates. Commercial media focus more on the "common citizen" by pointing to the individual without connection to other societal institutions (unions, parties, etc.) that define a broader context (Benson, 2009; Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

The *organizational level* takes the overall goals and economic aims of a single media organization into account by considering factors such as "ownership of the organization, policies, goals, actions, rules, membership, interaction with other organizations, bureaucratic structure, economic viability and stability" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 130). Most media will be primarily guided by an economic logic that at least ensures (or in the case of public service broadcasting, justifies) their survival on the market. If the business model of a media outlet targets a specific audience, then we can possibly expect content that serves this audience. Hence, media may strive for more inclusive coverage when it serves the media's economic interests (Brinkmann, 2013); for example, if target groups are diverse or if an audience segment that requests a broader view is targeted (Benson, 2009). However, dealing with diversity in the newsroom is a particularly relevant question in economically challenging times since active diversity management requires time, money, and energy, which, according to Graf (2017), can be more easily achieved by larger media companies.

Moreover, research has shown that more minority staffing does not automatically lead to higher subscriptions within minority communities, nor does it necessarily lead to increased trust in a news outlet (Adams & Cleary, 2006). Hence, a strategic expansion of diversity efforts may not automatically improve the economic standing of a news organization. Thus far, however, there is a lack of studies that examine how diversity efforts rank in importance compared to other strategic goals of news organizations, particularly with regard to the ongoing economic crisis of the news as well as the digital transformation of news organizations, making its study all the more relevant (Nielsen, 2018).

The level of *professional working routines* touches journalists' work more directly. The orientation toward news values is one example; audience orientation, commitment to objectivity, and practical implementations are also important aspects that determine journalistic

working routines. Meanwhile, certain journalistic habits and routines may hinder diversity, such as when editorial work is driven by time pressures, an intense working pace, and the standardization of journalistic practice that overrules deviations from the norm (Graf, 2017). Strong pressure to adapt to internal routines and a strict editorial line make it difficult for individuals to contribute alternative perspectives (Breed, 1955; Schwenk, 2006, Awad-Cherit, 2008). Awad-Cherit (2008) argues for the need of a strong interventionist management of diversity instead of a laissez-faire approach that will only lead to "ornamental multiculturalism" (p.12) serving an economic rather than a normative ambition and is less sustainable. Johnston and Flamiano (2007) note that it is necessary to actively and regularly reflect and address the issues of inequality and racism, when the objective of genuine equality is to be truly pursued in newsrooms.

Finally, the *individual level* considers the individual—while also regarding journalists as a group—and allows for the analysis of the backgrounds and characteristics of individual journalists. Studies often highlight that journalists in Western societies are typically a rather homogeneous social group with a mostly white middle-class background (Awad-Cherit, 2008; Pritchard & Stonbely, 2016; Turner, 2014). As such, there remains doubt regarding whether they can gain access to different groups of society (e.g., migrant communities, working-class people) or understand and adequately reflect the struggles and worries of these groups. There have also been suggestions that journalists who have risen in their own socio-economic status become incapable of reporting autonomously on other societal elites, such as political or economic elites (Hesmondhalgh, 2019; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). However, even though awareness for these issues and a lack of diversity is on the rise, change may only occur slowly. After interviewing journalists of color in US newspapers, Johnson and Flamiano (2007) concluded that a critical mass must be reached within a newsroom so that minority issues and perspectives are heard. Beyond that, and even more importantly, people of color must be in positions of control to influence and change traditional routines and practices in newsrooms (Awad-Cherit, 2008; Johnston & Flamiano, 2007). Examples for gender diversity are provided by Craft and Wanta (2004), as well as Schwenk (2006) who demonstrated that even if a balanced ratio exists between women and men as reporters, women will be asked to cover topics that are considered "soft" and "female" (e.g. culture or entertainment) unless there were more female editors who would also assign them to topics and beats often seen as "hard" and "male" domains (e.g. politics or business). One should also not lose sight of other aspects playing out on the individual level. For example, language skills are a decisive factor for joining the journalism (Brinkmann, 2013; Graf, 2017). The greater need for technical skills in light of

digitalization processes in the media industries may attract certain types of persons, while closing doors for others.

Our empirical investigation will use the dimensions of Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) Hierarchy of Influences Model as a structuring tool to sort aspects and factors that influence staff diversity in news organizations and the creation of a diversity-sensitive climate in the editorial office. However, we will also need to consider interdependencies and connections to varying dimensions against the background of complex power relationships (Walgenbach, 2017).

Research design

Our research design tried to ensure that we gather information for all possible levels of influence to assess the current state of newsroom diversity in terms of editorial staff diversity as well as diversity-sensitive working conditions. By using a comparative design, it is possible to relate three different social systems as well as the institutional relationships in which journalism is embedded. Therefore, we conducted 18 semi-standardized interviews with editors-in-chief or managing editors in three European countries: The United Kingdom, Germany, and Sweden. This comparative design not only facilitates the detection of similarities and variations by contrasting different national contexts but also contributes to an improved understanding of journalism structures in the broader European context.

The UK counts as a representative of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) liberal model for a media system with a strong market orientation. Diversity developments in the liberal media system may be regulated by market mechanisms ("laissez-faire model," Awad-Cherit, 2008). However, Germany and Sweden both represent the democratic-corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) with stronger state regulations but different approaches to fostering multiculturalism and cultural diversity in society (Horsti & Hultén, 2011; Pöttker, Kiesewetter, & Lofink, 2017). Also relevant to the institutional level are the relationships that the media maintain with other parts of society. We let our interview participants describe the problems (problem awareness) and assess the state of diversity in the news industry of their countries.

Within each country, we approached different media organizations to gather information at the organization level. While we identified a comparable sample of important news organizations in each of the countries, our study does not claim to be representative given the limited number of interviews. Instead, we selected national quality (print) news media, regional media, public broadcasters, and private broadcasters (see Appendix I) that we knew in advance

are important parts of the overall media landscape, some of them with large audience reach (Newman, Fletscher, Schulz, Andi, & Nielsen, 2020), to ensure a good reflection of the traditional media landscape in each country.

Our questionnaire (see Appendix II)¹ touches upon different aspects of the organizational context and practice. We asked participants to describe their recruiting procedures and evaluate these according to their diversity aims. Also, we were interested in whether the organization pursued specific measures to increase diversity and whether these were successful.

We also asked our participants several questions aimed at gathering information on the level of journalism practice. We asked them about the relevance of the topic of diversity in their everyday editorial work and whether it is on the agenda and actively discussed. We also wanted participants to assess whether the lack of diversity is perceived as a problem and whether they had examples of incidents in which diversity caused conflict or, on the contrary, a particularly good outcome that would not have been possible without a diverse newsroom.

We also included questions on the individual level by asking people to assess the state of diversity among their staff in terms of gender, economic background, and minority or migrant status. Additionally, we wanted to know more about the personal experiences of our interview participants (whether they consider themselves as "typical" representatives of the journalistic profession, e.g., in terms of their social background, and what this has meant for their careers to date). Other questions in our interview scheme addressed the personal role of our interviewees in the diversity enhancement processes of their organization, such as whether they have an urge to drive the process forward or whether they have taken the initiative to allow for change.

The research team conducted the interviews between October 2018 and March 2019. Interviewees were approached by email or personal contact. All interviews were conducted personally by members of the research team. Interviews lasted between approximately 30 minutes and one hour and were conducted in English (in the UK and Sweden) and German. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for pre-defined themes in MaxQDA. Another coder independently checked all individual codings and conflicts were resolved by comparing and discussing results. Participants authorized all quotes used for illustration in this paper.

¹ We propose to provide both tables from the Appendix as online supplement to the paper.

Although we received consent to do so, we did not anonymize interviewees. Apart from minor edits for the sake of clarity and readability, the quotes appear in their original form.

Results

The heuristic model proposed by Shoemaker and Reese (2014) structures our analysis to find answers to our central questions of (1) how can diversity be achieved among the editorial staff and (2) what is necessary to shape a more diversity-sensitive climate in which differences can be part of the editorial work. Except for the social system, we extracted information concerning the different levels from the interviews and synthesized the information to identify relevant differences at each level. This approach allows us to differentiate three main degrees of performance at each level (see Table 1). At each level, we can assign the media outlets of our sample to one of the degrees. However, not every organization completely fits an ideal type. Some media outlets fit more into an ideal type than others, especially since it seems that there is a gradual transformation from one degree at one level to the other. Moreover, some media outlets have taken steps at certain levels but not on others.

Table 1 Types of media according to their performance regarding diversity at the levels of analysis

<i>Level</i>		<i>Type 1</i>	<i>Type 2</i>	<i>Type 3</i>
<i>Institution</i>	Social responsibility regarding diversity	Talent over diversity	Representing social structure	Serving a diverse society
	Industry assessment	Other challenges greater than diversity	Growing awareness but lack of action	Slow progress perceived within the news industry
<i>Organization</i>	Recruitment	Standard procedure: interview and assessment center	Openness toward experiences	Range of measures to ensure diversity in the recruitment process
	Measures	No specific measures	Concentrating on content	Active measures for promoting staff diversity
<i>Practice</i>	Editorial routines	Diversity issues do not influence routines	Greater openness and sensitivity	Active reflection of routines and practices
<i>Individual</i>	State of newsroom diversity	No numbers and/or poor state of diversity	Slow progress perceived toward more diversity	Approaching true representation

The following sections detail each classification with examples on the different levels. First, we briefly introduce the social system level, which will provide greater context for the following considerations and classifications on each of the other levels.

Social system level

Assessing the social system level allows us to take the broader social context—in which media companies operate—into account. For our analysis of diversity in newsrooms, it seems especially relevant to assess the state of diversity within society as well as the media industry's capability to represent this diversity.

We chose three countries for our comparison: the UK, Germany, and Sweden. All three countries are well-established European democracies with free media that operate in capitalist economic systems. However, all three countries have different backgrounds in terms of their migration history. The UK's colonial history has shaped its society until today (Harper & Constantine, 2010). The last UK census (2011) reported that 12.9 percent of people living in the UK refer to themselves as "non-White." Moreover, according to Vargas-Silva and Rienzo's (2019) report on migration in 2018, an estimated 14% of the UK's population—or 9.3 million people—were born outside the UK². Sweden also has a long history of migration. The country had one of the most liberal migration systems with several waves of immigration during the 20th century until it changed its asylum laws during the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015³. Sweden, with its population of approximately 10 million, officially reports having 2.5 million people with a "foreign background," which includes "foreign-born" and "Swedish-born with two foreign-born parents," which represents one-fourth of the national population. Germany also experienced several waves of immigration during the 20th century. Official numbers indicate that about 20 million people living in Germany have a migration background (i.e. people who do not have German citizenship by birth or who have at least one parent to whom this applies⁴) out of a population of approximately 81 million in 2018⁵. Migrants, therefore, represent approximately one-fourth of the population.

These numbers can be assessed in relation to the diversity of newsrooms and the journalistic profession at large, which is, however, difficult given the lack of available data.

² Rienzo, Cinzia and Vargas-Silva, Carlos. "Migrants in the UK: An Overview," Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford, October 2019

³ <https://sweden.se/migration/>

⁴ <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Methoden/Erlauterungen/migrationshintergrund.html>

⁵ <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabellen/liste-migrationshintergrund-geschlecht.html>

Systematical monitoring of the state of newsroom diversity does not exist in either of these countries. However, representative data from 2016 showed that most German journalists are male (60%), middle aged and holds a university degree (64%). In Sweden and the UK, the gender balance is almost equal (54% male in Sweden, 55% male in the UK), but in both countries the average journalist is middle aged (on average 51 years old in Sweden, 43 years old in the UK). A majority of journalists in the UK and Sweden holds a university degree, even though the percentage is significantly higher in the UK (86%) than that in Sweden (60%) (Hanitzsch, Steindl, & Lauerer, 2016; Nielsson, 2016; Thurman & Kunert, 2016). A study including the UK and Germany found that the percentage of women in top editorial positions at the top ten offline and online news brands in terms of weekly usage remains low in both countries (27% in Germany, 29% in the UK, compared to e.g. 41% in the US or 47% in South Africa) (Andi, Selva, & Nielsen, 2020).

Data on ethnicity, migration background or class is even harder to come by and to compare. The latest estimates for Germany suggest that approximately 2 to 5% of journalists are themselves immigrants or have come from immigrant families (Geißler & Pöttker, 2009; Pöttker et al., 2017) Geißler and Pöttker (2009) estimate that 84% of all German newsrooms do not have any such staff members, while recent figures show that only 6% of German editors-in-chief have a migration background compared with 25% of the general population (Neue deute Medienmacher*innen, 2020). Statistics for Sweden suggest that 5% of journalists were not born in Sweden (and 2% non-Western born) (Hovden, Bjørnsen, Ottosen, Willig, & Zilliacus-Tikkanen, 2009; Hultén, 2009). Representative figures for newsroom diversity in terms of ethnicity and other variables are not available for either country. However, a recent study on the races of editorial leadership positions at the top ten offline and online news brands in terms of weekly usage in Germany and the UK⁶ found that none of these outlets had a non-white top editor (Nielsen, Selva, & Andi, 2020). While data on journalists with a migration background does not—to our knowledge—exist for the UK, representative data from 2016 reports that Black Britons, who made up 3% of the UK population at the last census in 2011 accounted for just 0.2% of journalists, with Asian Britons representing approximately 7% of the UK population and just 2.5% of journalists (Thurman, Cornia, & Kunert, 2016).

Although the numbers are difficult to compare directly, one can get the impression that the state of newsroom diversity compared to society's diversity is insufficient in terms of the inclusion of people with a non-white or migrant background in all three countries despite their

⁶ Sweden was not included in the sample.

different colonial and migration histories. Gender equality seems to be reached at a fairly similar level, even though the cited data does not account for the position of women in the editorial hierarchies or assignment to sections or topics. The proportion of people with a non-academic background is most difficult to assess. From the numbers about the percentages of people with a university degree, we can only conclude that it seems most difficult for people in the UK to enter the profession without a university degree. Additionally, the UK has high study fees for studying journalism, which may be an obstacle for people from lower social economic parts of society.

Social institutions

According to Shoemaker and Reese (2014), the level of social institutions is complex and cannot easily be assessed using only a few variables. For our purpose, we investigate two aspects: the media's own assessment of their role as an institution in a society in representing diversity, and their inter-institutional orientation regarding the state of diversity within the media industry.

We asked our interview participants how they view the media's role and responsibility in and towards society and what the media must be able to achieve in terms of representation and diversity, thus determining the relationship media should have toward the people and society. Across all three studied countries, our interview participants largely agreed that the media must represent the different views of people in society and offer different, pluralist perspectives to reach and represent broad audiences. However, there were gradual differences: Some interview partners did not agree that diversity among staff is necessary to achieve these goals. They argued that talent is more critical than diversity and that a good journalist should be able to cover and represent all parts of society irrespective of their own background (HAZ, TT, Göteborgs Posten).

A second group of interviewees argued the opposite, namely that they have observed a severe disconnect between the media and society because journalism and the media lack diversity and are out of touch with the lived reality of some parts of society. For example, Polly Curtis, former editor-in-chief of Huffington Post UK, mentioned the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle (now Meghan, Duchess of Sussex) as a watershed moment in this regard, which was accompanied by (occasionally racist) discussions about Markle's origins: "It was an incredible moment for diversity in Britain. And I had no one in the newsroom who could confidently write about that because of a lack of diversity in my team. We were already working to change that, but that moment accelerated our efforts."

Jochen Arntz (at that time chief editor, *Berliner Zeitung*) also narrated how a lack of diversity had caused problems: "We face that issue every day. We would like to know: What do people talk about in certain coffeehouses in Kreuzberg [location of the newspaper's headquarters, note of the authors]? What do they talk about in mosques? What do local Turkish families talk about when Erdogan comes here? [...] And then we realized that we need help." Peter Frey, editor-in-chief of German public broadcaster ZDF voiced similar concerns: "We don't have enough people of Turkish or Arab origin who speak the language and are at home in these cultures. And who can understand and translate all the curiosities, characteristics and conflicts of these communities."

As evident from these interviews, very often, diversity from a newsroom's perspective is about a newsroom's own needs, including better access to minority or marginalized sources, cultural environments, and communities that the regular white academic journalists would not be able to access at the same speed. However, some of our interview partners acknowledged that diversity is not solely about improving their own work but also about the issue of better and equal representation. As Anne Lagercrantz (STV, Sweden) put it: "We have to reflect Sweden as a whole. Sweden has changed quite a bit, but we haven't at the same pace". This third group of interviewees emphasized that journalism must serve a truly diverse society. Moreover, they explicitly mentioned different types of diversity and included ethnic diversity in addition to religion, sexual orientation, and disability (Reuters, BBC, Huffington Post).

Joanna Webster, Managing Editor Strategy and Operations EMEA at the news agency Reuters, for instance stated that "we have to embrace diversity of thought, of style, of experience, of culture, race, color, gender, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, veteran status – you name it. [...] I don't think it's just an issue of fairness. I think it impacts our ability to create world-class journalism. It impacts our access to stories; it impacts our ability to reflect the world in creative ways. And also, I think it impacts our ability to attract and retain talent. If individuals come into a newsroom and don't see diverse groups of people, it would be an unattractive place for people to work."

When talking about diversity, many of our interviewees spoke about gender and ethnic origin as well as social class, regional background, or political preferences. Sometimes they introduced additional aspects, such as sexual orientation, age, or disability. In our study, one of the most pressing issues for many media representatives was the disconnect of newsrooms from people of working-class background and from those living in rural areas. Paul Clarkson, managing editor of *The Sun*, argued, "I think there are people we haven't reached yet, or we

haven't reached in great enough numbers. [...] This should even include the white working class. People who are probably the most underprivileged people in some communities. That they feel they have an opportunity to make it here, and we're trying new ways to reach those kinds of people, too."

Media outlets also rely on each other for institutional guidance (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014) when it comes to issues such as diversity. We asked our interview participants how they would assess the media landscape of their country in terms of diversity and found strong similarities in the assessments within each respective country. Our British interviewees stated that they perceive at least slow progress in addressing a lack of diversity and a growing awareness for the problem with different media taking actual measures. The German interview partners agreed that the issue was not recognized as a problem across the board and that while some German media organizations discussed diversity, they lacked concrete action to address it, with local and regional outlets, in particular, not appearing overly concerned with the issue. In Sweden, all of our interview participants mentioned that diversity is not the most pressing issue for many news organizations—likely due to concerns around the digital transformation of news and a fragmentation of the political landscape affecting trust (Sehl et al., 2020)—and that there is only slow progress toward reaching true diversity—except for public service broadcasting, which is big enough (and thus has enough money) to care, according to our interviewees.

Organizations

At the organization level, we assess organizational processes as they may influence the diversity of the newsrooms. Two aspects are especially relevant here and were covered in our questionnaire: the recruitment process and actual measures to promote diversity within the organization.

How job application and entry processes are structured within an organization may play an important role in an organization's overall diversity, and we identified different approaches across the media organizations in our sample. The first group employed standard recruitment procedures and interview processes or assessment centers (e.g., ZDF, HAZ, SZ, Kent messenger, The Sun, TT, Göteborgs Posten), which involved testing individual skills that are decisive criteria for hiring.

The second group of interview participants emphasized that their organizations placed an increasing emphasis on different personal experiences and backgrounds of applicants.

Formal education was less important for those media, where leadership focused on "the personal [journalistic] track record" of applicants (Sverige Radio) and less common life experiences (DPA, Huffington Post, Channel 4, Sverige Radio). Some interviewees highlighted that, for them, talent not necessarily correlated with a university education, but that it was generally harder to find good candidates without degrees. "We're missing that passionate individual that maybe doesn't want to go to university or doesn't have the means to. And I don't know how to find them," as Joanna Webster (Reuters), said.

A third group of organizations had gone a step further and had formalized the aforementioned "awareness approach" in their recruiting practices, actively changing procedures to ensure greater diversity. Different measures included removing personal details from applications to prevent unconscious bias, discussions regarding how to achieve diversity before advertising for a position and reflecting on the language used in the advertising material, using unconventional advertising methods (e.g., social media) to reach out to certain groups, establishing diverse panels for job interviews, or using quotas to ensure that various, diverse candidates and women would land on the shortlists for interviews (Reuters, BBC, Telegraph, RTL, Berliner Zeitung, SVT, Dagens Nyheter).

Some interviewees pointed to the necessity to reach out to candidates who would not dare to apply for a job in the news industry. As Katie Lloyd, Development Director at BBC News, said: "When you go into communities where people ... nobody in their family, nobody they know, nobody's friend's parent is in journalism or media—why would they ever consider that as a career?" Wolfgang Krach, editor-in-chief of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany) echoed this notion, saying: "Maybe people with a family history of immigration apply predominantly where they see others from immigrant backgrounds. And we don't have many in our newsroom. So maybe that's why they don't feel encouraged to apply."

Going beyond traditional understandings of diversity, some interviewees also highlighted that a lack of role models as an obstacle to more diversity was not only a problem in respect to certain communities, but equally applied to an age divide and the news industry's—in the eyes of some applicants—old-fashioned image. "We have problems explaining to young people what journalism is", as Sven Gösmann, editor-in-chief of German Press Agency dpa, put it: "If you take a look at the journalism films of recent years: *Spotlight*, *The Post*... it's all about newspapers in the 1970s or 20 years ago. There are no role models for contemporary journalism. There is no Instagram editor as the heroine of a Netflix series." Finding people "where they are" was seen by many as a partial remedy to these issues, with many of our

interviewees stating that they actively used social media when advertising for positions. Jochen Arntz, editor-in-chief of *Berliner Zeitung*, reported: "The applicants we attract through social media are very different from those who usually apply. You can see that quite clearly."

Regarding the instruments implemented for fostering and creating more diversity, we could also identify three different groups. The first group had taken hardly any measures, meaning no active diversity management, nor was diversity a topic of concern and discussion at the executive level (HAZ, SZ, Göteborgs Posten, TT, Dagens Nyheter). A second group attempted to connect more closely to its audiences and focused on actively changing their content to foster diversity. For example, the two German TV channels (RTL and ZDF) established formats where journalists move to a more low-profile community to find stories and present the perspectives of people living in these communities. The Swedish Sverige Radio created a language service in which people can report in their own languages. These examples point a more diversity-sensitive content that results from considerations about the need for diversity.

A third group had taken sophisticated measures to foster diversity. Most of them offered training (e.g., unconscious bias training), mentoring programs, and leadership training for specific groups (e.g., DPA, *Berliner Zeitung*, Reuters, BBC, SVT) in an attempt to foster awareness for the issue across the whole organization and in an effort to attract and retain diverse staff. As Joanna Webster from news agency Reuters, for example, explained: "We have diverse slates, diverse panels, anonymous testing [and are] making sure that our remuneration is equitable. [We are also] making sure that we look at a wide pool of candidates [and] that we actively go out and source candidates rather than waiting for them to come to us. Being aware of unconscious bias [and] being transparent with jobs is also important." Like Reuters, the BBC has also introduced various interview panels to increase diversity in hiring processes and remove bias, according to Development Director Katie Lloyd. The corporation has also set out a new policy requiring leadership roles above a certain level to have an ethnic minority candidate on the shortlist.

Within the third group, there is a subgroup of measures that addressed a UK-specific problem: attending higher education is expensive in the UK. High tuition fees often deprive people from working-class or minority backgrounds of the opportunity to go to university which is, however, often a pre-requisite for a career in the UK media, especially on the national level. In response, several UK media organizations in our sample established special scholarships, internships, and apprenticeship schemes for recent school-leavers to provide training within the

organization or to finance their university studies (Reuters, The Sun, Kent Messenger, Huffington Post).

Routines

Some of the measures described in the previous paragraph also shape working routines and practices in newsrooms. Most interview participants reported that diversity was a topic of discussion in their organizations and that they try to reflect and consider it in their daily work. However, there were also media organizations where the issue did not play a role or—even if discussed from time to time—does not (yet) influence editorial practice (e.g., SZ, Berliner Zeitung, HAZ, Kent Messenger, TT, Dagens Nyheter, Göteborgs Posten). A second group of interviewees reported that they had noticed a greater variety of topics as well as higher sensitivity for minority issues and different perspectives because of growing awareness around diversity within their organization. A third group reflected on their newsroom and working cultures, especially in terms of how to lead discussions, e.g., who could speak in meetings and how people could be encouraged to speak up and contribute their perspectives.

However, a strong newsroom culture can sometimes hamper such efforts, as Anne Lagercrantz (STV) observed: "We recruit something different, and three months later, you're just like us." This statement underlines the fact that while reflecting upon diversity in the daily routines of a newsroom is crucial, there is also a risk that homogenizing tendencies can act as a counterforce and should not be underestimated in attempts to achieve more diversity.

Concerning the role of audiences in ensuring diversity Ian Carter, editorial director of the Kent Media Groups, also referred to a "vicious circle" when not only a newsroom is too homogeneous, but less educated and well-off audiences remain silent while the privileged make themselves heard: "I used to edit newspapers in Croydon and in South London, which are obviously massively diverse areas. We did have to make conscious efforts to ensure that the balance was right. [...] So I think it's slightly chicken and egg. If people that come to us with their stories tend to be from that more traditional, less diverse background, they are the ones getting covered because they are the ones who might phone up and say 'We have an event at our school. Please do come and cover it.'" Such an imbalance may well be overlooked if diversity considerations do not play a role in the editorial routines. Hence, this example also illustrates how the reflection of routines may shape content decisions when followed by the conclusion that the full picture requires the active seeking of other perspectives than the dominant ones.

Individuals

Finally, at the individual level, we consider two aspects: the state of newsroom diversity among the media organizations in our sample (as reported by our interview participants) as well as the personal backgrounds and motivations to engage with the issue of diversity among our interview participants. It should be noted that the quality of information we received regarding the state of diversity varies significantly. We had asked questions regarding migration background, class, and gender, but only a few organizations in the sample officially kept track and could provide data on these variables. Most interview participants provided us with personal assessments. Four interviewees could not answer these questions.

One collective judgment is that the right gender balance exists in most newsrooms. Hendrik Brandt, editor-in-chief of Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (HAZ), said, “To be honest, currently I’d like to see more men apply. We are tilting hugely toward the female side.” Particularly among young talent, women are well represented, according to our interviewees. However, a different picture emerges when it comes to leadership and senior management positions, where women remain underrepresented.

Most interview participants complained about a lack of people with no university degrees or with a migration background. However, there are a few notable exceptions. German TV channel RTL has—according to its editor-in-chief—30% people with migration background. The BBC reported to have clear targets that they almost always meet: 15% BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic), 8% of people with disabilities, and 8% LGBT. Channel 4 (UK) also provided us with precise numbers and reported a roughly 50/50 gender balance, 25% of newsroom staff without a university background, and 20% BAME. In Sweden, the public service broadcasting SVT also reports a 50/50 gender balance as well as 22% with a migrant experience. Ed Fraser, the managing editor of Channel 4 News, the news program of the UK’s other public broadcaster, Channel 4, said, “We’ve got quite a good ratio of ethnic diversity within our news organization. We work hard at that. I think our biggest challenge is we have a certain number of posts, and people who come to Channel 4 News tend to stay at Channel 4 News for a long time. It’s a good place to work; they get exposed to quite a lot of different kinds of journalism here. So they can stick around. We don’t have a big turnover which means those valuable staff positions are very rare.”

Finally, we assessed the personal backgrounds of our interviewees. Several aspects were striking: In Germany, all our interviewees were middle-aged white men with a university degree. Two participants told us that they were the first in their families to go to university,

while one interviewee had completed his university studies via secondary education. Among our British interview participants, four people reported that they have a working-class background, and one of them did not have a university degree. As for our Swedish interview participants, three told us they were from a lower-middle-class background, either growing up in a rural area or problematic suburb or being the child of Jewish refugees from Poland.

Conclusion

This paper started by asking which strategies media companies pursue to enhance diversity among their editorial workforce and which factors contribute to a diversity-sensitive climate within newsrooms. Applying Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) model, we examined different levels of influence—from a macro- to a micro-perspective—to determine which aspects and factors help to facilitate change in newsrooms. After a systematic investigation at all levels, we can summarize those aspects that help diversity to flourish when they interplay as follows:

First, none of our cases has reached the state of a genuinely diverse newsroom in which people with different backgrounds have equal opportunities to produce content that meets their own expectations of catering to varied and diverse audiences in their respective countries. However, some media outlets have tackled the issue in more than one dimension aiming at the representation of different people as well as the implementation of diversity-sensitive newsroom culture. If we understand the path toward more diversity as a gradual process in each of the dimensions presented above, we identify the following points as vital in contributing to greater newsroom diversity.

1. Social system level: Industry-wide monitoring needs to connect the state of diversity in newsrooms with that within society.

Representative data on the different aspects of diversity in the countries' newsrooms is scarce in all our three cases. Such data, however, seems necessary for news organizations to be able to compare their editorial staff diversity with that of the entire industry as well as with the society in terms of representation and to set and monitor management goals regarding proportional representation. Monitoring the society's as well as industry's diversity also helps to detect structural inequalities which then can be addressed more effectively – as we have seen, for example, in the case of some of the UK media in our sample that established programs to support non-academic career starters who are particularly underrepresented within the British journalism (Thurman & Kunert, 2016).

2. Institutional level: Media companies need to be aware of their role and responsibility as a social system within society.

One's positioning in the diverse society must be accompanied by recognition of this diverse society as a potential audience that they want to serve. Those companies in our sample that emphasized that the media must truly serve and cater to a diverse society also indicated more effort to implement newsroom diversity on the other dimensions. They also critically assessed the progress of the industry and compared their own development with that of other organizations. Only some of our interview partners connected the need to represent the society with the ambition to produce the best possible journalism. Hence, a high problem awareness and critical reflection of their role and journalistic standard seem to be essential preconditions for further measures at other levels. However, such a high level of reflection cannot be taken for granted. Across all our cases, interviewees from UK media seemed to have a higher problem awareness around diversity. They identified more significant progress in their national industry than their German and Swedish counterparts. But other examples showed that diversity may also only be acknowledged as a minor problem among others while other challenges seem to be more economically pressing (e.g., digital transformation or the broader talent question). Such an assessment among people in responsible positions was also identified by Graf (2017) who stresses the role of the expected surplus-value of diversity as a driving force for the overall problem awareness and resulting measures. Our results also support the considerations by Awad-Cherit (2008) who argues that high normative ambitions to implement diversity will be a more sustainable driver of diversity than economic considerations, especially since the latter more often go along with a *laissez-faire* approach without strategic diversity management.

3. Organizational level: Advertisements for positions need to target different groups systematically, e.g., by working with advocacy organizations. Recruiting processes need to follow diversity plans. Employers need to pay journalists in training.

At the organizational level, specific measures can be taken to increase staff diversity and support a diversity-sensitive working environment. Regarding the recruitment process, reaching out to diverse communities is a critical aspect. Creating an inclusive hiring process that tries to prevent unconscious biases influencing hiring decisions, e.g., by extending shortlists for positions or using quotas, is another key approach. Other interventions include, for example, mentoring and leadership training to promote and retain diverse staff. Particularly, the point of enabling people to move up to leading positions within the company was already emphasized by several other studies as a central element of active diversity and sustainable management

(Awad Cherit, 2008a; Johnston & Flamiano, 2007; Schwenk, 2006). Finally, paying people for their work even when they are in training (or on internships) is an organizational decision that has a direct influence on whether people from less stable financial backgrounds can afford to study journalism (e.g., training schemes in the UK, paid internships in Sweden).

4. Routine level: Newsrooms need to actively reflect and address their routines and culture concerning biases and structural inequalities. People need to have the chance to bring in their perspectives without being reduced to that perspective.

Diversity on paper does not equal diversity in practice. Even if all types of people are employed in a newsroom, lived diversity can only be achieved if journalistic practice and editorial culture are constantly under review and do not try to eradicate differences. If time pressure and a newsroom culture that champions the status quo dominate, there is a risk that differences will be washed away with no normatively desired effect on greater equality and better representation. This means that journalists need to be allowed to bring their own perspective to topics to find approaches from different, diverse angles. Nevertheless, newsrooms should be aware and counter the issue of “typecasting.” Instead of automatically assigning, for instance, migration topics to the colleague with a migration background or women to soft news sections, topics should be reviewed with input from different perspectives.

5. Individual level: Commitment of people in leading positions is a driving factor. News organizations need to monitor the state of diversity in their newsrooms for long-term strategic management.

The personal commitment of people in leading positions appears to be an essential requirement for structural change. Interviewees, who appeared to be genuinely concerned with the issue of diversity among their editorial staff were better informed about the topic and able to present more ideas and strategies to tackle the issue. Individual awareness and sensitivity may also support the long-term process of creating a truly diverse news organization which need to be accompanied by a close monitoring. Only if organizations are genuinely aware of the people (and their background) who work for them they can implement strategic measures for active diversity management.

Operating from the premise that—apart from being an issue of justness—news organizations and newsrooms in particular need to be diverse to adequately convey the views, concerns, and interests of all parts of a population reasonably, especially of those who are less served in the media, this study has attempted to assess how leading news organizations in three

European countries cope with this challenge of implementing diversity related measures in their newsrooms. Our study supports earlier considerations that editorial staff diversity needs to be accompanied by a diversity-sensitive newsroom culture in which diversity can be experienced and lived to truly serve a diverse society (Johnston & Flamiano, 2007; Schwenk, 2006). Our results also underlines earlier research that stressed the need for (1) active management (e.g., Awad Cherit, 2008a), (2) constant reflection of structures and inequalities (Awad Cherit, 2008a; Johnston & Flamiano, 2007), as well as (3) active addressing and supporting of diverse target groups during recruiting and career-building (Horsti & Hultén, 2011; McGill, 2000)

It should be noted that this study is limited by its small sample size, which does only allow for limited generalizations. Further research should expand the scope, for instance, by looking at a wider and more representative sample of news organizations, including in other countries with different media systems and societies. Future studies could look at each of the dimensions analyzed here in more detail, for example, by conducting a quantitative multilevel analysis.

Nevertheless, we have been able to identify several factors that are important for promoting and achieving diversity in news organizations, with four overarching factors as central prerequisites. First, personal awareness and sensitivity of people in leading positions is decisive for the implementation of further measures. Strategic management of diversity within the news organization is closely connected to individual commitment. Second, diversity management needs to be based on detailed monitoring that connects the state of diversity in the society with the industry and the single newsroom. Sufficient data is necessary to trace process and detect structural deficiencies. Third, all measures taken aimed at fostering a diversity-sensitive culture to enable and promote a permeability of perspectives towards the content level. Finally, diversity efforts can only work if underlying structural forms of discrimination, sexism and racism are confronted and actively challenged, both in news organizations and beyond. Diversity efforts and initiatives implemented without a real commitment to broader cultural change run the risk of avoiding and sugar-coating these issues, thus hindering rather than helping the cause.

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APPENDIX**Table 1: Interviewees in this study**

Country	Organisation	Interviewee	Function
Germany			
News outlets	DPA (German Press Agency)	Sven Gösmann	Editor-in-Chief
	ZDF (Public Broadcaster)	Peter Frey	Editor-in-Chief
	RTL (Private broadcaster)	Michael Wulf	Editor-in-Chief
	Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)	Wolfgang Krach	Editor-in-Chief
	Berliner Zeitung	Jochen Arntz	Editor-in-Chief
	Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung (HAZ)	Hendrik Brandt	Editor-in-Chief
United Kingdom			
News outlets	Reuters	Joanna Webster	Managing Editor, Strategy and Operations, EMEA
	BBC News	Katie Lloyd	Development Director
	The Telegraph	Jo Morrell	Managing Editor
	The Sun	Paul Clarkson	Managing Editor
	Kent Media Group	Ian Carter	Editorial Director
	HuffPost UK	Polly Curtis	Former Editor-in-Chief
	Channel 4 News	Ed Fraser	Managing Editor
Sweden			
News outlets	TT	Jonas Eriksson	CEO, Editor-in-Chief

	SVT (Public broadcaster)	Anne Lagercrantz	Head of News
	SVT (Public broadcaster)	Sabina Rasiwala	HR and Director of Communication
	Dagens Nyheter	Peter Wolodarski	Editor-in-Chief
	Göteborgs-Posten	Christofer Ahlqvist	Editor-in-Chief
	Sverige Radio	Olle Zachrisson	Head of News

APPENDIX II - Questionnaire

Core questions	Interview questions
<p>What significance does the issue diversity have? What challenges and problems are grave enough? ➔ Own house ➔ News industry</p>	<p>What are the three biggest challenges your editorial department has to cope with at the moment?</p>
<p>Future of journalism Who chooses to be a journalist nowadays? (Has there been a change) Is there a shift/change noticeable? How attractive is this profession still today? (status, working conditions, payment)? Does an increased/decreased level of appeal (of the profession) have an influence on younger generations, on news coverage or on the reputation of journalism? How would journalism have to change to adequately fulfill the demand for diversity?</p>	<p>Why do you think people choose to become journalists these days? <i>Has there been a change?</i> How do young journalists today influence journalism altogether? Some say that journalism is more and more progressing into a profession that one must be able to afford. Do you personally feel that way? <i>Why could that be the case?</i></p>
<p>Recruitment How satisfied are respondents with the young journalists? What are requirements for candidates? Recruitment process: How do respondents reach potential candidates and how satisfied are they with the results?</p>	<p>Please name those characteristics (regarding knowledge, skills and personality) that are most important for potential candidates. Are there young people you would like to hire but can't reach?</p>

<p>Awareness Do people perceive a lack of diversity to be a problem? If yes, have there been key moments?</p>	<p>Jeremy Corbyn demands that the BBC should disclose the social background of their journalists. What's your opinion on this topic?</p> <p>Do you discuss the topic "diversity" within your editorial office/ newsroom?</p> <p>Do you perceive the lack of diversity to be a problem? <i>If yes:</i> <i>Has there been any specific event or a turning point that made you aware of the problem?</i></p>
<p>Diversity Diversity in the newsroom/ department (numbers?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Background • Gender • Race <p>What aspect is the most difficult to handle? Where are the problems/Where is the friction?</p> <p>What consequences does diversity obtain?</p>	<p>Who typically works within your newsroom with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Background • Gender • Race <p>Do you have any numbers?</p> <p>Are there any examples how diversity within the newsroom has influenced working routines and news coverage? <i>(problem/ conflict or enrichment?)</i></p> <p>Concerning diversity, do you feel that something would need to change in your recruitment procedure? <i>What role does the consideration of diversity play in the process of recruitment?</i></p>
<p>Measurements What would fundamentally have to change to achieve more diversity?</p> <p>What are measurements that respondents have already implemented? With what success?</p>	<p>Do you apply any specific instruments to increase diversity ("diversity management")? <i>Are there any promotion/advancement programs for specific groups?</i></p> <p>How do you assess the success of these instruments? <i>What is the most difficult aspect to handle?</i></p>

<p>Diversity in the news industry</p>	<p>How do you assess diversity regarding social background, life experiences and world views in British/ Swedish newsrooms altogether? <i>Can you identify a specific trend in one direction?</i></p> <p>Which media outlet – in your opinion – is a pioneer regarding diversity in your country?</p>
<p>Information concerning media outlet/ journalism program Economic situation and staff/ student development</p>	<p>Main focus of coverage/ specific aspects regarding topics and audiences (→ own research)</p>
<p>Entry barriers (application procedure + assessment centers, qualifying examination)</p>	<p>Own research</p>
<p>Information concerning position, career and <i>social background</i> of respondents</p>	<p>Would you please tell us a little bit more about yourself? What is your social background and how did your career develop?</p> <p><i>Some people like to say that journalists are typically a rather homogeneous group of white middle class men. Would you consider yourself to be a typical representation/representative of that group/guild?</i></p>