Minority Demographics and the Swedish Armed Forces: Pushing the Agenda Forward

by Carl Wilhelm Fallenius

Resumé

Än har ingen forskning publicerats som tittar på etniska minoriteters representation i Försvarsmakten. Syftet med denna studie handlar om just detta, att starta forskningsfältet genom att undersöka hur Försvarsmakten kan arbeta med mångfaldsarbetet mer effektivt, representativt mot minoritetsgrupper och använda lämpliga taktiker för att uppnå detta. Däremot saknas tydliga, definierbara och mätbara mål, vilket hämmar resultaten. Samtidigt har Försvarsmakten haft ett tydligt jämställdhetsfokus vilket inte varit lika tydligt kopplat till jämlikhet (t ex minoriteter). Hursomhelst finns en tydlig vilja inom organisationen att förbättra sin representativitet i samhället, men intervjuerna indikerar att större fokus bör läggas på synlighet i vissa områden. Mer specifikt, sådana områden där en större andel människor bor som tillhör etniska minoritetsgrupper. Dit bör organisationen rikta mer av sin externa kommunikation samt att skol-/yrkesinformatörer bör användas mer aktivt där.

SWEDEN HAS IN recent years experienced a high influx of immigrants who now substantiate a big proportion of society.[1] At the same time, the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) makes great emphasis on their goals of being demographically reflective of the Swedish society.[2] However, one quick look into the demographics of the SAF leads to a conclusion: the organisation is not close to demographically representing the population when speaking of minorities with a foreign national background. This observation stems from five years of experience in the organisation, but no official percentages related to the demographic composition of SAF exist since the organisation does not keep track of that. There are however statistics regarding percentages of native or foreign-born citizens in different professions in Sweden. Here, the military profession ranks as the absolute lowest amongst ten other professions, which partly supports the claim that the SAF is particularly bad at representing these new citizens.[3] Of course, one part of the reason is that service in the military requires citizenship, which some foreign-born do not have, but still the statistics confirm the personal observation from being a part of the SAF for five years.

Evidently, having goals and clear reasons towards reflecting the society which we are set to defend is one thing, realising those goals seems to be another. However, how can we bridge this gap of being more reflective on society? How can we – through diversifying the organisation – build a stronger defence to protect the nation?

Is a more diversified organisation more successful? This is debated and different opinions exist. Richard et al. imply that

diversity promotes success when the focus is on innovation.[4] At the same time, if innovation is of lesser importance, diversity might decrease results. Gomez and Bernet support that idea whilst adding that it correlates with improved team communications and risk management, both vital for military organisations.[5] Whilst a stereotypical view of military culture would be conservative and non-innovative, transformation and innovation are highly idealised factors within contemporary warfare.[6] It is likewise crucial when looking at Swedish key factors in operational art: *manoeuvre warfare, flexibility,* and *mission command*.[7] The organisation itself also states that a diversified organisation has direct causal linkage towards success in warfare.[8] This claim is strengthened by research where police services have attained more credibility and the public's confidence when successfully working with diversity.[9] This is important because the Police is also a governmental agency with a monopoly on violence, dedicated to security, albeit within the nation's borders, thus closely resembling the SAF. Likewise, credibility and the confidence of the public towards the SAF is crucial in war, crisis, and conflict.

So how is it then that the SAF draws direct conclusions that reflecting Swedish society is both morally right and brings success, but still fails at it? What is not going according to plan in the organisation's attempt to become more dangerous for an intended enemy? Specifically, *why* are the Swedish Armed Forces failing in recruiting minorities with foreign national backgrounds?

To define minority with a foreign national background, several factors are used. Statistikmyndigheten – the Swedish authority for keeping statistics – defines foreign background as either being born in or having one or two parents born in another country.[10] As well – in this study – it is also based upon which country. Stemming from a European or North American country was regarded as not being part of a minority group. This is due to a social constructivist-perspective of whiteness and racialisation. Whiteness thus becomes continually reproduced based on different conceptions as race and ethnicity, which in turn can lead to racism towards different bodies and appearances.[11] Some groups are thus racialised by the majority population which in turn can lead to worsened opportunities in society based on peoples' appearances. In a Swedish context, this racialisation can occur by the white majority population, especially towards those people that look different than the majority. Whilst not being fault proof, this categorisation to exclude those with a foreign national background in North America or Europe were thus a method to focus the study on groups which have encountered racism due to skin colour in Sweden. Henceforth, the described group will be referred to as "minorities".

Suffice to say, the study regards sensitive topics which need diligence and thoughtfulness when exploring. The limited statistics regarding minorities is an aggravating factor but a necessary one. We do not want a society where skin colour defines your present, past and future. This study could however be criticised for doing just that, placing people into groups and looking at it from an unpleasantly systematic way. It is however necessary at times. For instance, with implementations and measurements of gender equality-goals, methods, and policies; equality between sexes is strengthened.[12] Without measuring differences between men and women, for example their participance in the SAF, how are we supposed to implement proper measures to combat gender inequality? The same can be said with minorities. Sometimes, group belonging will have

to be a factor to improve everyone's right to equal opportunities.

Avery and McKay: The Basis of the Study

The theoretical underpinning of the study took base in Avery and McKay's theory about attracting diversity where they found five different successful tactics which were either assertive (offensive) or defensive.[13] Regarding which was most successful, it had to do with the organisation's diversity reputation. If it was positive or neutral, assertive tactics should be used, especially in tandem with each other. However, if the diversity reputation of an organisation was negative, defensive tactics was needed.

Assertive tactics includes *ingratiation*, *promotion, exemplification*, and *supplication*. To *ingratiate*, an organisation should be specific in which media their *impression management* – i.e. external communication to convey a certain image of the organisation – is seen. At the same time, impression management should show diversity, and present inclusive policy statements. Meanwhile, recruiting events should focus on locations or institutions which have a higher degree of minorities, and recruiting personnel from the organisation should represent diversity. These recruitment opportunities could especially include certain events such as Diversity fairs.

If an organisation has been especially successful with diversity management, *promotion* is a way to capitalise on previous successes. It involves presenting evidence in their impression management that the organisation has been successful in diversity management. For example, advertising can promote their actual existing diversity on the workplace or recruiters from minority groups can speak of their positive experiences within the organisation.

Exemplification is a tactic used to show corporate social responsibility through sponsoring certain organisations or associations which work with E&D . For example, the SAF employs *exemplification* tactics when participating in Swedish Pride marches. This participation sends external messages towards the public that the organisation values and supports freedom of sexuality and everyone's right to live as they choose.

The last assertive tactic is *supplication* where organisations portray a dependency to diversify themselves. This can be used instead of *ingratiation's* showing of highly diverse ads. For example, if an organisation lacks diversity, a method might be to convey the message that they want to be more diverse rather than saying that they already are.

If an organisation has a negative diversity reputation, defensive tactics such as *disclaimers*, *apologies*, or *prosocial behaviour* can be employed to improve it. However, these tactics might be negative for organisations with a neutral or positive diversity reputation as they might imply that bigger problems exist within the organisation. Defensive tactics can thus be destructive when recruiting with E&D in mind.

Disclaimers might for instance be employed when conveying an image that the organisation is diverse, but it is not in reality. They can then avoid unrealistic expectations through a message. *Apologies* can be used when something negative regarding E&D has recently happened, for example if a police department has historic records of racism but now wants to remove that negative stamp. It can thus be sincere about historic shortcomings, whilst conveying messages that they want to improve. *Prosocial behaviour* revolves around doing voluntary actions to help others. As example in this in-

Assertive tactics

Ingratiation

- Ads in targeted media
- Highly diverse ads
- Inclusiveness policy statements
- Recruiting at female/minority institutions
- Minority/female recruiters
- Diversity fairs

Promotion

- Advertising Diversity Management Success

Exemplification

- Publicized sponsorship

Supplication

- Messages conveying dependence

Defensive tactics

Disclaimers

Apologies

Prosocial behaviour

Figure 1: Assertive and Defensive Tactics according to Avery & McKay.

stance: that the organisation assists certain people, organisations, or associations which conveys a message of them prioritising E&D.

The study employs their theory to explore the research question, especially as the interview questions took base in exploring the SAF usage of these recruitment tactics. However, defensive tactics and *supplication* were segments of the theory which were disregarded, as it was apparent that the SAF were more assertive when conveying impression management. Yes, *supplication* is an assertive tactic according to the theory, but it seems a more defensive tactic due to its apologetic nature: the conveying of a failure in diversity and implying that the organisation wants to fix the problem. *Promotion* tactics were also disregarded, as one of the basic premises of the study takes root in the failure of SAF in recruiting minorities. Thus, it becomes hard to promote diversity management successes. This all meant that *ingratiation*- and *exemplification*-tactics were looked at to conclude whether the SAF employs them and how these are perceived. A successful implementation of these should, according to Avery and McKay, lead to a more diversified organisation. Also, as a positive or negative diversity reputation governed whether assertive or defensive tactics should be used, it became interesting to seek an answer to that question. The following factors were thus examined when constructing operationalisations for the interviews *(Figure 2)*.

The Interviews: How and Why?

To seek answers to these questions, it became apparent that there was a need to find both subjective and objective truths. It was because of these reasons that interviews were chosen as the methodology of the study as they are useful when trying to catch perceptions of subjective realities and when exploring unexplored topics where source

- Does the SAF target specific media or locations to reach out to minorities?
- Does the SAF show diversity aimed at minorities in their impression management?
- Does the SAF show clear stances on the inclusiveness policies towards minorities?
- Does SAF's recruitment personnel represent diversity towards minorities?
- Does the SAF cooperate with, and sponsor, certain organisations, associations, or diversity fairs who work towards minorities?
- How does minorities regard SAF's diversity reputation?

Figure 2: Basis for the operationalisations.

material might be unavailable.[14] The interviews were conducted within a selection of people from minority groups in Sweden, as well as certain employees within the SAF.

First, it is vital to distinguish the interviews from each other. When the employees of the organisation were interviewed, they are called informants. When people from minority groups were interviewed, they are called respondents. There are higher demands for source criticism during interviews with informants as they are asked to tell an objective truth. Especially as this study might criticise the SAF, diligence was needed when formulating questions and analysing responses. Meanwhile, there is no objective truth when interviewing respondents. The intention was rather to find their subjective truth.[15]

Differences also existed between the groups when choosing who to interview, i.e. what sample. The informants of SAF were chosen through the concept of *centrality* which means the choosing was governed by their centrality in the organisation based on the research question. For example, a navigational officer is less likely to answer the relevant questions compared to someone working with recruitment or communication.[16] To understand which persons were central in the SAF, an informant from the organisation was first interviewed. This led to a greater understanding regarding areas of responsibility and further contact was made. As such, seven informants were interviewed which is more diligently described in the analysis chapter *(Figure 4)*.

When choosing respondents, convenience sampling was used and the criteria for the samples were based on three governing principles:

1. Only strangers were interviewed to keep scientific distance between the interviewer and interviewee as interviews with friends or people you know tend be influenced by your previous relationship.[17]
2. The respondents had to be part of a minority group and have a foreign national background from outside of Europe and North America. This choice was made because their understanding and subjective opinion of diversity is vital for the results of the study. If people from the white majority in Sweden were picked, different perceptions of diversity would be captured, especially as white majority groups tend to put lower demands on that in organisations.[18]
3. Subjective experts were avoided as these might already have fixed opinions regarding the ability or inability of SAF before the interview and were thus avoided.[19] It is impossible to know whether a respondent has biased ideas beforehand,

but for example, respondents working with recruitment or engaged in politics were deemed inappropriate.

Also, the number of both respondents and informants were kept at as low as possible, partly because of time related reasons but also because difficulties could arise when analysing numerous interviewees.[20] The final number of respondents was ten, interviewed over a two week period. These constituted diversity in sex and age. Five women and five men were interviewed, and the ages spanned from 20–25 towards 60–65 with most being somewhere in their thirties to fifties. Some were 1st generation immigrants, and some were 2nd generation. Optimally, a list would be provided which would be similar to *Figure 4* but when consent from the respondents was collected, their anonymity was prioritised. Thus, it was first after the interviews that this was deemed as interesting data, for instance their age or cultural heritage, for the results of the study.

Going forward, it became apparent that the theory had to be broken down into two categories: one towards respondents and one towards informants. All these operationalisations were broken down from the six questions in *Figure 2*. The interview questions that the respondents were asked is depicted in *Appendix A*. They were constructed with the following four operationalisations in mind.

Interviews with the Respondents

How diverse do the respondents view the impression management of the Swedish Armed Forces?

This raised the question of the definition of diversity. What is considered enough to claim that one portrays diversity towards minorities? Since this is a subjective area as different people will have different demands when they conclude an organisation to be diverse, this was measured through showing the Instagram account of SAF where the organisation depicts militaries in different environments. The selection of pictures was chosen based on different criteria. Firstly, as the study focuses on recent years of SAF, only pictures posted between 29th July 2022 and 8th March 2024 were chosen. Secondly, only pictures which portrayed a military person with recognisable features were included. For example, if a picture included a tank or fighter jet, that picture was disregarded as they do not say anything about diversity shown. As the total number of posts during that timeframe and with that criterion is immense, showing all of them to the respondents would occupy too much interview time. Thus, every fifth picture was chosen randomly. For example, every picture was assigned a random number between 1–5 and only pictures of a certain number were used.

How do the respondents feel regarding the representation of diversity in the recruitment personnel of the Swedish Armed Forces?

One vital role when talking of recruitment is recruitment personnel (yrkesinformatör or skolinformatör in Swedish). They are mainly the face outwards on job fairs, school fairs, and recruitment activities which means their visibility towards potential future employees are substantial. Every Instagram of regiments and weapon branches were scoured for pictures of recruitment personnel between 2023–2024, which amounted to 18 pictures containing 34 different recruitment persons. These were then shown to the respondents

which gave their subjective opinion whether they deemed recruitment personnel as diverse or not.

How clear is the policy of the Swedish Armed Forces towards the respondents that the organisation strives to recruit minorities?

As much of the reputation of the organisation is built through external communication, could their latest social media posts clearly show a strive towards recruiting minorities? Before respondents were shown Instagram, they were asked about previous perceptions regarding stance and policy on diversity of the SAF. They were then afterwards asked how they viewed the posts, especially how they saw them through a diversity perspective. Was the stance of the organisation clear on the matter?

How do the respondents view the diversity reputation of the Swedish Armed Forces?

Perhaps the hardest question of all, what is the diversity reputation of the SAF? It became a matter of capturing the implicit essence of each interview with the respondents: their subjective opinions. An overall picture was established through several questions such as their previous perceptions of the SAF, thoughts after viewing Instagram, and the possibility of them taking employment within the organisation.

Interviews with the Informants

The remaining three operationalisations were rather asked towards the informants of SAF which made them less directed towards capturing subjective opinions. Rather, objective truths were wanted regarding how the responsible persons in the organisation worked towards including minorities. Interview questions were hand crafted based on the work of the respondent within the organisation. These questions were thus not attached as appendices as they varied heavily. Some specific questions are however highlighted in cursive to exemplify.

Does the impression management of the Swedish Armed Forces focus on minorities as a target group to increase diversity? If so, how?

Swedish society could be argued to be geographically segregated which indicates that certain areas could be targeted to increase visibility towards minorities.[21] Questions were asked if this aspect is included in the view of the organisation of their visibility in Swedish society, especially in areas with more minorities. For example, questions like "do you focus specifically when communicating as an organisation towards certain areas or locations based on gender, age, ethnicity, and so forth?". Especially as this study focuses on social media – or at least the view of the respondent on Instagram of the SAF – questions towards the social media department were also asked. For instance, regarding which target groups they have with their posts and if they have internal documents regulating depictions of minorities.

Do the recruitment personnel of the Swedish Armed Forces focus strategically on locations where a higher degree of minorities are located? If so, how?

Regarding their strategy in using recruiting personnel towards specific areas, questions

were posed such as: "Is there any specific central focus when using recruitment personnel? Do you have certain areas or groups that are prioritised?".

Do the Swedish Armed Forces publicly sponsor entities and associations which promote minority causes? If so, how?

Have any strategic initiatives been taken with this in regard? Can similarities between the organisations' endorsement of Pride be found in associations and entities which promote minority causes? To conclude whether the SAF does this, questions like the following was stated: "Is there any cooperation with associations or organisations who work with integrations, minority rights, or similar? For example, something similar to the commitment of the SAF to Pride parades".

The Answers

Interviews with the Respondents

How diverse do the respondents view impression management of the Swedish Armed Forces?

Important to note is that most respondents possessed little or no previous experience with impression management of the SAF. However, an interview with the social media department of the SAF showed that their target audience is between the ages of 18–25 which only one of the respondents were. Six respondents had viewed advertising in public places such as in public transport but also, exposure was attained mainly through television or news media. Of the respondents which had previous perceptions of commercials, three[22] regarded them as positive and interesting, and two[23] had no distinguishable perception. Another[24] viewed them as reinforcing a negative picture of the organisation, a negative picture which seemed to originate from a lack of trust towards the SAF. Interestingly, of the five respondents who had a perception beforehand, two[25] pointed out a feeling that the advertising was aimed towards women. Respondent nine even said: "I think the SAF has invested more effort, in my opinion, on gender equality rather than diversity. And you could wonder why, have they not thought about it? Is gender more prioritised than other dimensions?" During the rest of the conversation, it was obvious that the respondent did not look at it negatively concerning the focus on the gender issue. The quote revolves more around the fact that the person noticed some sort of prioritisation.

After the respondents viewed Instagram posts, the focus was often again drawn towards gender diversity rather than other dimensions of E&D. Not to say that this was negatively viewed, it was viewed as beneficial, and opinions were mainly positive regarding the commitment of the organisation towards women on social media. However, only respondent 4 and 7 expressed that the SAF conveyed diversity regarding minorities. Respondent 7 first articulated it as "I saw people from my region" but later conveyed "Honestly, I felt it was more for women than people of immigrant backgrounds". This person was not alone in this idea, although it is impossible to claim that this thought was some sort of consensus between the respondents. None the less, the respondents generally implied a lack of diversity regarding minorities but that other dimensions of E&D were shown, especially gender equality.

- How diverse do the respondents view the impression management of the Swedish Armed Forces?
- How do the respondents feel regarding the representation of diversity in the recruitment personnel of the Swedish Armed Forces?
- How clear is the policy of the Swedish Armed Forces policy towards the respondents that the organisation strives to recruit minorities?
- How do the respondents view the diversity reputation of the Swedish Armed Forces?
- Does the impression management of the Swedish Armed Forces focus on minorities as a target group to increase diversity? If so, how?
- Do the recruitment personnel of the Swedish Armed Forces focus strategically on locations where a higher degree of minorities are located? If so, how?
- Do the Swedish Armed Forces publicly sponsor entities and associations which promote minority causes? If so, how?

Figure 3: All the operationalisations which intended to be answered through the interviews.

How do the respondents feel regarding the representation of diversity in the recruitment personnel of the Swedish Armed Forces?

After viewing pictures of recruitment personnel, a clear focus on gender equality was brought forth from five respondents,[26] stating things like "there were a lot of women. But it doesn't look like there's a lot of different nationalities and ethnicities",[27] "It seems less diverse. More women but less diverse ethnically",[28] and "there were women and men, more women, but no one with an immigrant background".[29] However, only two out of ten respondents[30] implied that the lack of minorities would have a negative effect on them, albeit minimal. Instead, six respondents[31] expressed feelings of insignificance concerning whether recruitment personnel were diverse or not. More focus was rather on competence and a welcoming aura which seemed to be the case from the pictures. For example, one person said: "look, everyone looks nice in their uniforms. The most important is the uniform and the knowledge they possess."[32] Two of these respondents[33], who felt insignificance regarding the portrayal of minorities did however offer certain thoughts as to how younger people might view recruitment personnel. They stated that in their youth experience, young people from minorities might feel a bigger necessity that recruitment personnel are more similar to them. That they, when they were younger and eligible for conscription, would think of it differently than now. Respondent 9 even had experience similar to recruitment personnel and stated that they, in that association, reached out better to youths from minorities when there were people talking who were similar to those same youths--similar in the regard of skin colour, ethnicity, and area affiliation.

What was mainly expressed was positive feelings and a wish to talk to and see recruitment personnel, both now but also when they were younger and could have considered a military career. In fact, only respondent 2

recorded seeing and talking to recruitment personnel previously. Many others expressed that talking to people from the SAF during school or job fairs and local events could have led them on a military career path, especially those that felt an interest in the organisation as kids or adolescence. Some stated that it also could have been suitable now as adults, to attain a bigger trust and understanding of what the SAF does. One person expressed it as "somehow, during these occasions, when you see people from the Armed Forces, it becomes a status thing. You are playing an important role, representing your country".[34]

What might be the biggest explanation as to whether many respondents had not seen recruitment personnel previously in their life seemed to be their age. When many respondents were younger and eligible for conscription, the SAF struggled to stay afloat due to budgetary restraints. It was a time of cut downs in the organisation and most likely, the presence of recruitment personnel would have diminished.

How clear is the policy of the Swedish Armed Forces towards the respondents that the organisation strives to recruit minorities?

One of the first questions in the interview was formulated to capture perceptions in the eyes of the respondents as to how the SAF presented itself through impression management. As previously stated, the respondents generally lacked previous perceptions of the social media and advertising of the organisation. However, six respondents had previous experience of it and two of these[35] expressed that they had seen a clear ambition towards gender equality. Respondent 3 mentioned noticing an ambition towards minorities as: "the feeling I get when viewing the commercials of the organisation is that they are interested in involving minorities to strengthen diversity." Also, no one expressed that they perceived the SAF as not striving to recruit minorities.

With hindsight, the interview questions could have been clearer and more concise in asking whether the respondents perceived a clear policy or not. It seems as if the interview questions were better suited towards the diversity reputation of the SAF, advertising, and recruitment personnel. Thus, the answer to this question was not reached in this study but it can be stated that the respondents did not perceive the SAF to not strive towards recruiting minorities.

How do the respondents view the diversity reputation of the Swedish Armed Forces?

A question was asked regarding what the respondents thought the SAF values in their personnel: homogeneity or heterogeneity. This included what the organisation seeks in terms of behaviour but also dimensions within E&D. Only respondent 10 expressed a negative conception towards the SAF when speaking diversity. It was however only implicitly implied when analysing the interview as a whole. That person also described a perception of a stereotypical soldier as "blonde, white, cleanly shaved, and very xenophobic". Two respondents[36] were inconclusive in their opinions of diversity reputation of the SAF, which made it hard to analyse if they were positive or negative. However, the remaining seven respondents expressed positivity towards the SAF in terms of diversity, especially whilst discussing diversity dimensions such as gender, race, and sexual orientation. Many thought of the organisation as a place where people are treated equally regardless

of background. Benefits were laid out as something that the SAF most likely would enjoy. One person described it as:

> Personally, I'd think that the Swedish Armed Forces appreciates people with different backgrounds and mindsets. Maybe they're from another country with different experiences, especially language wise. That could be very valuable if we're to war abroad. I think the organisation looks at it positively. (Resp. 8).

Although it seemed as the SAF held a high diversity reputation in this regard, several[37] expressed that the organisation seeks behavioural homogeneity. Reoccurring values such as disciplined behaviour, pride, strive for results, seriousness, and being laconic are put forth. However, this does not seem to imply that the SAF only recruits certain people from certain groups. Rather, everyone could possess these attributes. At the same time, some[38] noted that they saw a discrepancy in demographics within the organisation compared to the rest of society. When they had seen the SAF in public places, fewer minorities were viewed in uniform, respondent 10 even noted that "I haven't seen anything else than white Swedes as soldiers". Of course, some others viewed it as having seen minorities wearing uniform. It was also pointed out that this was not only a problem for the SAF, rather something that many organisations in Swedish society struggles with. "It's just like everybody else. There are prejudices and the SAF are not better or worse than the rest".[39]

Questions arise when this discrepancy exists as many respondents believe that the SAF values heterogeneity – or at least not value homogeneity – whilst not being deemed demographically reflective of society by those same respondents. Whilst no causality is established in this study, it seems that many respondents[40] consider that the SAF are focusing on gender issues. It might thus be a factor that the gender diversity reputation of the SAF, which seems to improve rapidly, might spill over towards the other dimensions of their diversity reputation.

There are however difficulties to ascertain whether the SAF has a positive or negative diversity reputation based on the interviews. For this to be empirically concluded, comparations towards other organisations might need to be conducted. It is also possible that the interview questions were poorly formulated to answer this matter. But even if it seems difficult to describe the diversity reputation of the SAF as good, the respondents generally do not look at it negatively. Although respondent 10 described negative feelings towards the stance towards diversity of the SAF, that person generally had a lack of trust in the organisation. Also, just because one person expressed it does not mean it is true when looking at the respondents as a whole. Based on the interviews, the conclusion is that the diversity reputation of the SAF seems neutral. Although the organisation seems to take rapid improvements regarding gender issues, the same improvements are not as clearly viewed regarding minorities.

Other interesting finds

The last question of the interviews was formulated as: *What do you think the Swedish Armed Forces can do to recruit more minorities?* Although none of the respondents were experts on E&D and could offer genuine empirical expertise on the topic, their personal experience was deemed highly valuable. Especially interesting was that eight out of ten respondents[41] pointed towards similar approaches in solving the issue. That the issue might be information related. That many

people simply have insufficient knowledge about the SAF, especially in certain areas.

The idea was that the SAF should focus on educating, discussing, informing, and showing up in areas which has a higher proportion of minorities. This is especially stated during certain ages where people are more susceptible to think about enlisting in the Armed Forces, e.g. 16–19 years old. This could both be done in schools but also by arranging local information meets in those areas. For example, respondent eight stated: "I'd probably set up a station in these areas where, once a month, people could come and talk. Then send someone to schools every other week from the SAF with local knowledge and a minority background." This is certainly deemed highly resource consuming and might be unachievable, at least once a month or every other week. However, it points to a solution that many formulate. By approaching both adolescents in schools but also adults through the local stations, a shift in norms might be achieved in those areas. For example, opinions and views of parents are highly important when choosing careers, especially in the military.[42] Perhaps it is not enough to just educate and inform the younger generation, the older might need to be on board. This is also something that respondent 6 states: "Maybe not just educate youngsters but also their parents. Show that the SAF isn't harmful and that enlistment has strong benefits. Both young and old need knowledge."

Whilst discussing norms, one thing that might separate minority groups from the majority group is that in many families with a purely Swedish ancestry, relatives have often undergone previous military training or experience. For example, many of those have a father, uncle, or likewise which underwent conscription after high school and can offer experience and knowledge about the military. This might be a crucial variable when considering if someone wants to enlist in the SAF or not, but this study cannot empirically support that claim as it has not been designed towards that purpose. The study can however support that every respondent could have considered a career in the SAF when they were young but different aspects got in the way, mainly studies, other job offers, or gender-related issues as the gender reputation of the organisation at the time was flawed. This topic could be more interesting to further elaborate and explore but with a different interview sample, e.g. men and women between 18–25 years.

Interviews with the Informants

Does the impression management of the Swedish Armed Forces focus on minorities as a target group to increase diversity? If so, how?

This mindset in impression management seems to partly exist within the SAF. Informant 6 stated that when targeting recruitment in big city areas like Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, a diverse audience has been reached. A conclusion that the SAF then drew was to specifically target these metropolitan areas, partly because they contain a lot of people, but also partly because they contain a greater diversity of minorities. However, she also stated that they have established five different target groups with their recruiting communication, and that minorities are not one of these. Rather, the only target group within E&D was women. The other groups were rather different professions within the SAF, such as IT-personnel, technicians, and officers.

It was not only this informant that mentioned this certain focus on women regarding E&D, two others were very specific in women being a target group. Informant 5

Informant 1	Central Recruitment Coordinator	The area of responsibility revolves around education, coordination, and evaluation of the personnel of the SAF that works towards engaging conscripts towards a continued commitment in the SAF.
Informant 2	Anonymous	Works in the Department of Communication and Public Affairs.
Informant 3	HR director	Works in the the top echelons of the SAF with strategic subjects such as agreements with the trade union, terms of employment and benefits, executive recruitment, gender equality and diversity and different kinds of surveys linked to workings environment.
Informant 4	Head of Staff Management Section	Works broadly in the Department of Communication and Public Affairs with different projects and assignments.
Informant 5	Head of Employer Development Section	Works in the headquarters of the SAF in matters regarding the SAF as an employer.
Informant 6	Head of Section	Head of a section within Relations and Communications-department of the SAF which is a part of Human Resources.
Informant 7	Content Manager and Social Media Creator	Informant 7 was actually two persons interviewed at the same time. They were deeply involved in the central social media accounts of the SAF.

Figure 4: Informants of the SAF.

said that there is a difference in priority regarding E&D, especially regarding the guidelines from the political level.

> There has been a lot of work to include gender equality and integration in governmental authorities. This might be a reason as to why we've worked more intensely towards that question. For example, we have several educations regarding gender equality and integration. Of course, there are other regulations concerning other dimensions of E&D, mainly the Equality Ombudsman (DO)[43] and the Anti-Discrimination Act. But the fact that gender equality and integration is mandatory puts that question and work on the top of the agenda for us.

This claim is strengthened by informant 2 who says that the guidelines from the government are very clear regarding gender equality and integration. Further, in their General Action Plan concerning 2024–2030, the SAF writes that they have four priorities in their future E&D challenges: "increase the number of women, work systematically on gender equality, include gender equality in military operations and keep working according to our gender equality integration strategy." The plan also states that there is a goal to increase minorities within the organisation but seemingly, it is not a prioritised area.[44] Informant 3 also states:

> We've put a lot of focus on gender equality, but this does not imply that we don't want other dimensions of E&D. Of course, we want to be an equal and diverse organisation, but gender is the only dimension where we've put out specific and measurable percentage goals.

Generally, amongst the informants, there seemed to be an awareness of E&D, even though it mostly focused on gender equality. Everyone stressed the importance of the organisation to be reflective towards all parts of society. Thus, there seemed to be no lack of will to improve in E&D, especially whilst discussing the topic of this study. Whilst conducting the interviews, the informants frequently commented on the importance of improving in E&D matters and being more inclusive as an organisation. This can be exemplified whilst interviewing informants 3 and 5. When asking them about their personal views on how the SAF is fairing in E&D, informant 3 concluded that "I've never worked in an authority where the inherent values and ethics are this strong. […] That we have these commitments towards Pride, the International Women's Day etc. That we show our stance on E&D. I find that amazing". Afterwards, informant 5 said: "I agree. What's striking for me is that people here are not here because of the salary, rather the mission. We want to be here and contribute. That's crucial, that we find these matters important."

This perceived awareness and importance of E&D in the SAF is strengthened by their use of something called *Inclusive communication*,[45] which informant 6 told. This communication style seems to have been adopted at the social media department of the SAF. Informant seven described educational programs regarding Inclusive communication that they conducted. Further, there was an awareness of E&D when they frequently analysed their own social media feed. "Of course, we view all publicised pictures. They might be great but if we only depict white men, that's not how we want to do it […] We want to contribute and help out with a E&D perspective." In fact, they had created measurable targets for E&D. Regarding showing minorities, their intention was to portray 20% of their feed as people from minority groups. This intention was based on an analysis that around 20% of their intended audience belonged to minority groups with a foreign national background. However, this goal was hard to attain as obstacles got in their way. "If we only focus on 20%, that can be problematic. We've got other goals, for instance to show different Defence Branches (Navy, Army, Air Force). Thus, showing diversity not only includes E&D, it includes showing the entire SAF." Also, they did not want to portray a blatantly false image of the diversity of the organisation as they were aware of the implications that might be regarding realistic expectations.

All this leads to the impression that the SAF has focused on Inclusive communication when conducting impression management. This has partly focused on minorities, even though other dimensions of E&D, especially gender equality, seems to be more highly prioritised. The reasons why might be workload related. Informant 2 said that:

We are a limited amount of people. We can't let go of gender equality issues, that work is not finished. Thus, we must assess what we can manage to do without breaking our backs. What can we bear? What do we put money on? Diversity is super important and we should reflect society, no doubt in that. But if we can't recruit women, that's such a big part of the populace?

The social media department also seems to suffer from a lack of resources. Currently,

they were understaffed due to vacancies which might soon be filled. This might be a reason as to why they are not reaching their goals of depicting the full diversity-spectrum.[46] The will exists, the available resources might not.

Do the recruitment personnel of the Swedish Armed Forces focus strategically on locations where a higher degree of minorities are located? If so, how?

To answer this question, informant 1 offered central insights. Regarding when the SAF educates and trains recruitment personnel, E&D is included as a topic. They invite various experts on topics such as discriminating behaviour and gender issues. Also, cases are reviewed where the recruitment personnel discuss in seminar-like situations about problems to overcome in E&D. It did however seem like the gender issue was the more discussed dimension during the education. What might be the reason is that the gender issue has defined goals to achieve whilst there are none when speaking inclusion of minorities. This claim is strengthened by informant 2, stating that:

> The goals and regulations are not as clear whilst speaking other E&D dimensions than gender. We have great focus on gender equality on all levels. There are goals in our strategic documents regarding the increased representation of women and so forth. We have gathered force from these clear goals in the campaigns that we put out.

However, whilst goals towards minorities have been unclear in the past, they might not be in the future. The SAF has compiled official and open data regarding two specific target groups that recruitment personnel will start focusing particularly. These target groups were based on two blind spots that the Human Resource department had identified, blind spots in the sense that they were big parts of society but were less knowledgeable of the SAF. One group was women, the other group was certain locations and areas containing a higher percentage of minorities.[47] Thus, going forward, the recruitment personnel of the organisation will now focus strategically on locations where a higher degree of minorities are located. It is however unclear whether this strategy will have an impact as the strategic goals regarding E&D still only regulate clear and defined goals on gender, not other E&D dimensions.

Does the Swedish Armed Forces publicly sponsor entities and associations which promote minority causes? If so, how?

It became apparent early on that the SAF does visit and cooperate with such entities. For instance, they participate in Järvaveckan.[48] Informant 4 however said that the participation from the SAF had been recently analysed, especially as the organisation felt that they did not reach their intended target group. Informant 2 concluded that the target group for the event were those in the ages of 16 and older. The feeling was that they rather reached out to a younger audience. However, even though the SAF identified that the target group was not properly reached, the top echelons of the SAF seem to prioritise such cooperations. Now, the SAF is stepping up their participation by working more closely with Järvaveckan's founder, thinking over their placement on the fair, and that Supreme Commander of the SAF himself will stand on the main stage and talk.[49]

Other than Järvaveckan, no other recollections are made to any other such cooperations or participations. Informant 4 mentions hearing something about a co-

operation previously but cannot recall the details. However, the local branches of the SAF, such as different regiments and flotillas, have the mandate to initiate such projects themselves. Interestingly, while interviewing respondents, respondent 4 stated that he organised a big cultural fair or festival which gathered minorities. He also stated that the Police regularly participates, and he would love to have the SAF there. This does not imply an unwillingness from the SAF to participate, rather it implies that there are endless possibilities for the organisation to increase their cooperations and participations in events like these.

Clearly, the SAF participates in several other events which focuses on other branches of E&D. Informant three mentions participation in Gothenburg Horse Show and Sweden Horse Show with the goal being to attract women, and also annual participation in Pride parades are conducted to state that the organisation is defending the right to live as we choose. This all implies that the SAF is aware of the effects these events have and have an intention to show themselves there in order to attract equality and diversity.

Other interesting finds

One thing that became clear is that the will exists to become more inclusive towards minorities. The top echelons of the SAF seem to want this and some goals exist. For instance, one goal in the General Action Plan 2024–2030 is that minorities within the organisation should be increased so that the SAF can be more reflective on society.[50] Strikingly though, the road towards this goal has not yet been defined or prioritised. Three informants[51] witness the same phenomenon: that the SAF has not yet analysed how it is to be done. There is no measurability, no operationalised indicators to point out success or not. When that analysis is completed and clear goals are defined, a higher focus might be attained. For example, during a big military exercise, the social media department wanted to receive pictures to post on Instagram. They then ordered the local regiments to send specific pictures based on different criteria, one of them being to portray more minorities. This was deemed as a success and the pictures attained and pictures posted included more diversity on that dimension, according to them.[52] Goals might have to be more specific and guidelines more direct if the SAF want to reach their targets towards minorities.

Further, to be more specific and direct, informants 2 and 4 identified the need to analyse minorities not as a whole, rather as separate sub-groups. One stated: "If we are to do anything, we must first analyse the target group. We can't recruit minority group X and Y with the same campaign."[53] The other stated: "let's make this analysis so that we can start to reach this target group. Then, Human Resources can start to attract and recruit people from this group."[54] This process might need to start before the SAF can be more specific. More specific so that the organisation can become more reflective of society.

The Conclusions

Considering Avery and McKay, *why are the Swedish Armed Forces failing in recruiting minorities with foreign national backgrounds?* It seems that the SAF are using both *ingratiating* – and *exemplifying* – tactics to recruit minorities – which is correct as to the diversity reputation of the SAF – but the efforts of the organisation need to increase. Clearer, measurable, and more defined goals need to be laid out from the upper

parts of the organisation. Start the analysis regarding how to reach minorities as one, or several, target groups. An establishment of the *how* and *why* is needed. Yes, there is a high work burden in the organisation which makes it hard to allocate resources for that analysis. An idea would be to make use of the hundreds of bachelor and master theses, which are being written by cadets or officers each year. Announce scholarships for those that write a thesis on the subject so that the agenda can be pushed forward without the SAF having to write that entire agenda and analysis themselves. Then, spread the analysis throughout the organisation, especially in the local regiments and flotillas. The SAF has also improved greatly in gender equality over the years and that is still a project which needs further focus. Draw lessons from how the organisation has worked successfully there and use them to improve recruitment towards minorities.

At the same time, the answers from the respondents show interesting results. Showing diversity in different media and recruitment personnel is seen as positive, however it should not be regarded as an all-encompassing road to success. Rather, the information and visibility of the organisation might be. Of course, showing diversity in impression management is not negative but based on the respondents' answers, a general presence from the SAF and public knowledge about the organisation seems more important. Especially, send more recruitment personnel to schools, events, or fairs in certain areas. The organisation must improve their visibility towards minorities. However, other assertive tactics could be better used, show more minorities and be clearer on the E&D policy in impression management. Then, as results are attained and higher concentrations of minorities are recruited, use *promoting* tactics to ride on the wave of success.

However, something needs to be said about the generalisability of the respondents' answers. What they said in interviews are not reflective of the entire minority population in Sweden. To find out the opinion of the public on the SAF more closely, quantitative methods seem more appropriate. With hindsight, the results and validity of the study would be strengthened if the sample of respondents would be narrowed down. This could be done by looking at a certain minority group and age. For instance, on an age span of 18–25 years within one of the biggest minority groups in Sweden. This way, the interviews could have attained greater generalisability towards that specific population. Especially with a younger sample, e.g. 18–25, a greater relevance for the research question could be reached as the question revolved around recruiting people in those ages. However, even with this acknowledgment, the used method and sample is still deemed as adequate. With the available time for the study, some convenience when choosing sample was needed. To stand without respondents would make this study relatively meaningless.

Criticism could also be lifted that the study clumps together these heterogenous minority groups as homogenous, even though vast differences exist. This is however a chosen limitation of the study. The reason is that minority job seekers seem to value many sorts of diversity in advertisement, even if not portraying their own specific minority group. It seems that lifting minority diversity as a whole is sufficient to attract several different minority groups.[55] Also, if every separate group in Sweden would need separate studies of their own, the field would become incomprehensible as hundreds of studies would need conducting. It seems appropriate to start the field through this approach, even though the results and opinions of the

interviewees do not constitute or speak for the entire minority populace of Sweden.

Neither can the results of the study be described to single-handedly answer the research question. Diversity is multi-faceted and future research is needed. For instance, research could be conducted to show whether the intentions of the SAF and directions on a central and strategic level are being followed through in the organisation.

Other research could include a study to examine the hypothesis whether relatives with previous experience in the SAF have a noticeable impact on your own enlistment or not. That might in turn be connected to the fact that people without a minority background are more likely to enlist in the SAF. Thus, if that is the case, recruitment personnel might be even more necessary towards minorities and their presence in certain locations might need to be reviewed.

Further, one part of diversifying the organisation is recruitment, another is retainment. The theory used in this study was specific towards recruiting minorities and cannot describe questions regarding retainment. However, for this specific research question, Avery and McKay's theory was deemed successful and brought structure to the analysis.

The author is a Lieutenant in the navy.

Appendix A

Interview guide towards people with immigrant backgrounds

Guidelines of the first segment: create trust, broad questions, establish understanding of interviewees rights and consent and introduce the study.

- What do you think of the Swedish Armed Forces?
- As a potential employee, how do you view the Swedish Armed Forces?
- If you were to visualise an officer or a soldier, how does he/she look like?

Second segment: explore previous answers, narrow down towards the research question and return to previous discussions.

- Are you in contact with the advertising of the Swedish Armed Forces?
- What do you think about it?
- *Show Instagram posts*
- Regarding inclusion, diversity, and interest in the Swedish Armed Forces, how do you view these posts?
- Do you discuss the Swedish Armed Forces regularly? How goes the discussion? Have you thought about their consideration of diversity/homogeneity? What are your thoughts regarding which of these they value?
- *Show recruitment personnel*
- Regarding inclusion, diversity, and interest in the Swedish Armed Forces, how do you view these posts?

Third segment: wrap it up and approach topics which need further exploration.

- What do you think the Swedish Armed Forces can do to recruit more minorities?
- Anything to add?

Notes

1. Statistikmyndigheten: "Befolkningsstatistik", *SCB,* 2022-12-31, *https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/.*
2. *Försvarsmaktens inriktning för arbetet med jämställdhetsintegrering 2022–2025,* Försvarsmakten, 2021*; Försvarsmaktens strategiska inriktning 2021–2030,* Försvarsmakten, 2021*; Försvarsmaktens verksamhetsplan 2020–2026,* Försvarsmakten, 2020.
3. Statistikmyndigheten, "Befolkningsstatistik".
4. Richard, Orlando; McMillan, Amy; Chadwick, Ken and Dwyer, Sean: "Employing an Innovation Strategy in Racially Diverse Workforces: Effects On Firm Performance", *Group & Organization Management,* vol. 28, no. 1 2003, pp. 107-126, *https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601102250022*.
5. Gomez, L. E. and Bernet, Patrick: "Diversity improves performance and outcomes", *Journal of the National Medical Association,* vol. 111, no. 4 2019, pp. 383-392, *https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2019.01.006*.
6. Dombrowski, Peter: "Military Transformation" in Deni, John R. and Galbreath, David J. (eds.): *Routledge Handbook of Defence Studies,* Routledge, New York 2018, pp. 327-338.
7. *Doktrin gemensamma operationer,* Försvarsmakten, 2020, p. 28.
8. *Försvarsmaktens inriktning för arbetet med jämställdhetsintegrering 2022–2025,* p. 67.
9. Stergioulis, Evangelos: "Police and Diversity", *The Police Journal,* vol. 91, no. 3 2019, pp. 264-274, *https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258X17721136*.
10. Statistikmyndigheten, "Befolkningsstatistik".
11. Hübinette, Tobias and Tigervall, Carina: "To be Non–white in a Colour–Blind Society: Conversations with Adoptees and Adoptive Parents in Sweden on Everyday Racism", *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* vol. 30, no. 4 2009, pp. 335-353, *https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860903213620*.
12. Singh, Vijay P.: "The study of the legal and judicial approach in India to the problem of gender inequality in the workplace", *International Journal of Law and Management,* vol. 65, no. 3 2023, pp. 209-223.
13. Avery, Derek R. and McKay, Patrick F.: "Target practice: An organizational impression management approach to attracting minority and female job applicants", *Personnel Psychology,* vol. 59, no. 1 2006, pp. 157-187.
14. Esaiasson, Peter; Gilljam, Mikael; Oscarsson, Henrik; Towns, Ann and Wängnerud, Lena: *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad,* 5:1 ed., Wolters Kluwer, Stockholm 2017, pp. 262-263.
15. Ibid., pp. 272-273; 291-296.
16. Ibid., pp. 267.
17. Ibid., pp. 268.
18. Avery, Derek R.; Hernandez, Morela and Hebl, Michelle R.: "Who's watching the race? Racial salience in Recruitment Advertising", *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* vol. 34, no. 1 2004, p 146.
19. Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns och Wängnerud, *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad,* p. 268.
20. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
21. Statistikmyndigheten, "Befolkningsstatistik".
22. Respondent 3, 4 and 5.
23. Respondent 6 and 9.
24. Respondent 10.
25. Respondent 6 and 9.
26. Respondent 1, 3, 6, 7 and 8.
27. Respondent 6.
28. Respondent 7.
29. Respondent 8.
30. Respondent 3 and 7.
31. Respondent 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9.
32. Respondent 4.
33. Respondent 6 and 9.
34. Respondent 2.
35. Respondent 6 and 9.
36. Respondent 1 and 3.
37. Respondent 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10.
38. Respondent 1, 2 and 10.
39. Respondent 3.
40. Respondent 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
41. Respondent 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
42. van den Berg, Jelle and Richardson, Rudy: "Ethnic Cultural Minorities and their Interest in a Job in the Royal Dutch Army", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics,* vol. 47, no. 4 2009, p. 468, *https://doi.org/10.1080/14662040903363048*.

43. "DO is a government agency that works on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government to promote equal rights and opportunities and to combat discrimination." Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2023-05-11, *https://www.do.se/choose-language/english*, (2024-04-27).
44. *Genomförandeplan 2024–2030 Bilaga 1*, Försvarsmakten, 2024, p. 11.
45. Inclusive communication is a guiding principle when viewing or depicting persons, especially as organisations. It revolves around having an E&D-perspective when communicating.
46. Informant 7.
47. Informant 1.
48. The founder of Järvaveckan describes themselves as: "We want to show that diversity and inclusion not only enrichens our lives, it's rather the key to success and sustainability for our country and its inhabitants". Abdirahman, Ahmed: "Om Järvaveckan", *jarvaveckan.se*, n.d., *https://jarvaveckan.se/om-jarvaveckan/*, (2024-04-25).
49. Informant 2.
50. *Genomförandeplan 2024–2030 Bilaga 1*.
51. Informant 2, 3 and 4.
52. Informant 7.
53. Informant 2.
54. Informant 4.
55. Avery, Hernandez and Hebl, "Who's watching the race? Racial salience in Recruitment Advertising".