



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Coupling as a Tool for Organizational Efficiency

- the case Swedish Armed Forces

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Viktor Emmesjö 941105 & Anton Ringström 940703
Handledare: Sara Brorström

Abstract

A mismatch between what corporations and organizations display to be doing and what actually is being conducted on a day-to-day basis seems to be a rule rather than exception in today's organizational environment. According to previously presented theories in the field of new institutional organizational theory by Meyer and Rowan (1977), organizations must decouple their formal structure from what is actually being conducted internally to be able to be organizational efficient. The hypothesis of this study implies that some organizations, with high demands of displaying legitimacy, can benefit and yield efficiency by staying true to the formal structure. This paper has studied the organization the Swedish Armed Forces with the purpose of testing if and in that case how a tightly coupled structure in a public, hierarchical organization generates legitimacy and organizational efficiency simultaneously. Three areas have been focused; Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations and Equality. The reason why these fields were chosen to be examined was due to the fact that they were presented and recurring in the Code of Conduct presented by the Swedish Armed Forces (2016) as something that increases the organizational efficiency in the organization. The study includes 15 interviews with soldiers, squad leaders and platoon leaders from different regiments in Sweden, who were asked to openly discuss and explain how the work regarding the different themes of the study is being conducted and whether or not it was efficient in the way it was being performed. The material from the interviews was then compared to the information extracted from the Code of Conduct presented by the Swedish Armed Forces (2016). By comparing the information from the respondents to what the organization officially communicated, an understanding of how the structure was coupled, and if the coupling yielded the organization efficiency or not, was reached. The conclusions of the study are that not all of the hypotheses can be accepted, but one can still see a clear connection regarding the relationship between tight coupling and efficiency.

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1. Introduction

In the old institutional theory, the idea of human beings acting rationally is questioned. Since the human being's motives for action are not only to gain economic profit, but also to display a wealthy lifestyle, one can argue that the human being isn't rational in terms of economics. The motives of maximizing profit are questioned since the institutional perspective is suggesting that it is other elements than just the strive for maximizing the profit that is making the human being to act (Eriksson-Zetterqvist et al., 2012). The new institutionalism is developing the idea of individuals and organizations not acting rational and also that organizations' actual internal activities are inconsistent with the formal framework. Meyer and Rowan (1977) initiate this idea by suggesting that for an organization, the key to survival is partially based on the display of legitimacy. They stress the importance for organizations to elaborate rationalized institutional myths in order to gain legitimacy and long-term survival. Furthermore, Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that organizations, while elaborating institutional myths, implement the phenomenon of decoupling. Decoupling highlights the fact that an organization is displaying something on the surface while actually doing something else within the organization in order to reach or preserve the level of organizational efficiency. Thus, one can argue that the display of ceremony and myth is only the face of the organization and not what is actually being done. Moreover, Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that decoupling provides organizations with legitimacy and external acceptance since they are using a formal facade that is corresponding to the institutionalized rules and expectations. Since the facade is decoupled from the internal activities, the inside of the organization remains flexible and responsive to "practical considerations" (page. 357).

Coupling processes have been examined further in more recent studies suggesting that decoupling processes do not have to be conducted by will, but instead is a question of the organization lacking the resources necessary to carry through the incorporation of the external, institutionalizing pressure. Bromley et al., (2012) describe this phenomenon as symbolic adoption. Hallett (2010) on the other hand describes the process of recoupling, suggesting that the gap between the formal facade and the informal day-to-day activities can be reduced through the process of recoupling. These studies somehow highlight the term organizational efficiency. For instance, Hallett (2010) describes how recoupling processes in a school resulted in chaos and inefficiency. Since the term organizational efficiency can imply plentitude of meanings the definition of organizational efficiency in this study has been determined as "the ratio of the group's resources explicitly used in the production of outputs to the group's total resources" (Billyard et al., 2016. page. 797).

Previous research (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Hallett, 2010) states that the internal organizational efficiency in many cases is a result of the decoupled structure enabling the internal activities to remain unruffled. One can argue that such a statement is a simplification of reality and needs to be investigated further.

1.1 Issue

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), in organizations where the level of decoupling is minor or non-existing, the organizational efficiency often gets obstructed by the formalities the incorporation of institutional elements is causing. Unlike the ideas presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977), the outset of this study is that the relationship between coupling processes and organizational efficiency is more complex than what some previous research suggests. For instance, what about questions such as: are there organizations where the level of decoupling is minor, or even non-existing without being inefficient? Are there organizations where the display of myths and ceremonies is what actually is being done within the organization and that it is also being done successfully? And to take it to the extreme: are there organizations who use a tightly coupled structure as a tool to obtain organizational efficiency and if that is that case, how is it done? The issue is that explanations of organizational success and organizational efficiency can be argued to be based on generalized facts. For instance, the statement that organizations that are tightly coupled are inefficient and vice versa. Hence, this study aims to investigate the possibilities that decoupling does not necessarily has to generate organizational efficiency, but that instead a tight coupling between formality and internality sometimes is preferable in order to achieve a desirable level of organizational efficiency.

To solve this issue, the outset of this study is to investigate a public Swedish organization with major requirements of displaying legitimacy and trustworthiness. One can argue that the significance of the elaboration of myths in order to display legitimacy in such organizations is graver than in other forms of organizations since they, inter alia, have been publicly funded. To investigate an organization not facing the external pressure of institutionalized rules would be pointless for the purpose of our study why a public organization is preferable. Also, a desirable characteristic of the organization is a hierarchical structure with explicit regulations of the profession. Such an organizational quality is what Meyer and Rowan (1977) would suggest the internality would decouple from in order to obtain organizational efficiency. The organization we find suitable for those preferences is the Swedish Armed Forces (the Swedish name for the organization is “Försvarsmakten”, and the English translation “The Swedish Armed Forces” will from now on be used both when referring to a source of information and when discussing the organization), which will be the organization this study is set out to examine. Three themes within the military profession will be focused on. Those themes are Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations and Equality and are furthermore found in the Swedish Armed Forces’ (2016) Code of Conduct. The purpose of limiting this study to three themes is to be able to investigate fewer themes in-depth instead of examining wider and only on the surface. The three themes chosen were the ones that we found recurred the most in the Swedish Armed Forces’ (2016) Code of Conduct in relation to how it affects the organization’s efficiency. Since the Swedish Armed Forces’ (2016) Code of Conduct serves as a professional framework for the employees in the organization but also as an open document for anyone to read, one can argue that it is crucial in the context of what is articulated internally within the military profession, as well as externally to the public.

With the ambition of testing previous research and to make the issue of the simplification of the relationship coupling-efficiency more explicit, three hypotheses have been formulated that will be tested during this research.

Hypothesis A

- *The Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Organizational structure due to the tightly coupled structure.*

Hypothesis B

- *The Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Safety & Regulations due to the tightly coupled structure.*

Hypothesis C

- *The Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Equality due to the tightly coupled structure.*

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to test if and, in that case, how a tightly coupled structure in a public, hierarchical organization generates legitimacy and organizational efficiency simultaneously.

The ambition of the authors is to contribute with an understanding of the complexity regarding the relationship coupling-efficiency and furthermore to test already existing research that is suggesting that a tightly coupled structure often results in inefficiency on an organizational level.

2. Theoretical Framework

To understand coupling processes within the organization studied, this research takes its theoretical ground from new institutional organizational theory. The ambition is that new institutional organizational theory will provide an understanding about how organizations can take two different personas at the same time, and how that potentially is affecting the organizational efficiency. Since the concept of organizational efficiency is relevant to the study, one has to first define what organizational efficiency implies. Hence, first, the concept of organizational efficiency will be examined. Later, different perspectives of institutional organization theory will be highlighted including processes and concepts such as decoupling, symbolic adoption, implementation and recoupling, and later also various consequences of such processes, e.g. internal disbelief, turmoil and distress. The macro theoretical framework will be based on the perspective of Institutionalized organizations presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977). In order to gain a deeper understanding and to connect the research to the purpose of this study, more current approaches will be examined in the field of public organizations and decoupling such as the recoupling process presented by Hallett (2010). Moreover, since the Swedish Armed Forces is a public organization, the implications of the organization being public will also be touched in the context of institutionalized organizations.

2.1 Organizational Efficiency

With the purpose of making the term organizational efficiency well defined, a previous articulated definition will be used. Billyard et al., (2016) investigate the Canadian Department of National Defence in the context of efficiency measurements. In the research, Billyard et al., (2016) are presenting a definition that during this research will be used in a slightly modified way. The original definition presented by Billyard et al., (2016) is: “Organizational efficiency is the ratio of the group’s resources explicitly used in the production of outputs to the group’s total resources.” (page. 797). Billyard et al., (2016) employ the term “group” based on multiple variables. In this study, the concept of “group” will instead connect to the Swedish Armed Forces different units which will be examined. As will be highlighted later in this paper, the Swedish Armed Forces is an organization where organizational efficiency is difficult to evaluate on its output. Hence, in the context of this study, the term “output” will simply imply target achievement such as solving day-to-day tasks in the military profession. Thus, the definition of organizational efficiency during this research will be: “Organizational efficiency is the ratio of the unit’s resources explicitly used to reach target achievement, to the unit’s total resources”.

2.2 Institutionalized Organizations

Meyer and Rowan (1977) present the institutionalized organization whose survival and success is based on other factors than solely organizational efficiency. In order to maintain external acceptance, an organization has to follow the institutionalized regulations of the external environment. The usage of business techniques and policies are examples of such institutionalized elements that according to Meyer and Rowan (1977) may serve as providers

of legitimacy: “organizations which incorporate societally legitimated rationalized elements in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy” (page. 352). Hence, an organization that is reflecting the institutionalized techniques and policies will gain public benefits such as conformity and legitimacy since it is displaying the institutionalized standard. As organizations who fail to display such institutionalized elements endanger their own survival, many organizations will try to incorporate those elements. Meyer and Rowan (1977) describe the process of organizations getting matched together with the environment it is active in as isomorphism and furthermore suggest that while organizations are displaying similarities, they are together reinforcing the institutionalized standards.

Since a lot of external legitimacy benefits will follow, one of the organizational impacts of institutional environments presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977) is that organizations will incorporate institutionalized elements that are elevating their external status rather than increasing their actual organizational efficiency. The internal activities may not be coherent with the institutionalized elements why organizations have to find ways to maintain internal efficiency. Hence, organizations have to display a formal structure and institutionalized elements externally that does not correspond to what is actually taking place on the inside.

2.2.1 Public Organizations and Legitimacy

Meyer and Rowan (1977) propose that different types of organizations are evaluated differently depending on what and how they produce. The success of organizations whose efficiency can be easily evaluated on their output tends to be evaluated solely on that criteria, and a market is easily created in which the consumers gain rights of inspection and control. Therefore, efficiency determines success for these types of organizations. At the other end of the spectrum, we find organizations that are more difficult to evaluate because of the output that is difficult to appraise. Since the measuring of efficiency cannot define these organizations’ success, their success relies on their ability to adapt to environmental change and turbulence. Examples of these types of organizations can be schools, R&D units and governmental bureaucracies (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Since publicly funded organizations are dealing with macro-economic questions and national politics, one can argue that the adaptation to environmental turbulence is a great question for the success of these organizations.

If organizations are relying on the adaptation to prevailing social norms, one can also argue that the source of identifying success is whether or not the organization is able to display legitimacy or not. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) discuss several different definitions of the concept and conclude that legitimacy has to do with the action of seeking approval for organizational activities from the society which it is a part of. Since social norms are not immutable, the organization seeking legitimacy must therefore also be ready to change accordingly. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) suggest that organizations can take several different actions to become legitimate, of which two deals with the communication regarding the organizations’ activities in connection to prevailing societal norms. The seeking of legitimacy is something that affects and puts constraints on all organizations and some organizations are likely to be affected by it more. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) suggest that organizations that are

more visible (larger) and depend more heavily on social and political support will tend to engage more in legitimating behavior.

One way to adapt to a turbulent environment and at the same time display a high grade of legitimacy can be the action of decoupling. Since the Swedish Armed Forces is an organization which efficiency is difficult to evaluate on its output, according to the theory presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and the fact that the composition and mission of the organization demands high legitimacy according to the theory presented by Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), it should be inclined to decouple. The concept of coupling will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 Coupling Processes

2.3.1 Decoupling

As previously explained, organizations will incorporate institutionalized elements that are elevating their external status rather than increasing their actual organizational efficiency. Since efficiency as well is crucial for organizational survival and furthermore that a tight alignment between the formal structure and internal activities often is followed by inefficiency and inconsistency, Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that organizations will employ buffering strategies, separating the formal structures from the internal activities. Hence, organizations are not always exactly what they say they are. They tend to communicate one thing to the public while doing something else internally. Since there are differences between formal structures and the informal reality of organizations, Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that formal structures serve as myths since they are symbolic rather than operational. The buffering strategy separating the formal myths from the day-to-day activities is presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977) as decoupling. This is a concept that has been followed up by various research, e.g. Orton and Weick (1990) who argue that organizations can take different perspectives on how to attain efficiency regarding decoupling. They propose that “effectiveness from a strategy perspective is attained by conforming to the coupling patterns dictated by a combination of environment and strategy” (page. 215). Hence, a public organization with high demands of transparency can still achieve efficiency with a higher degree of coupling between formal structure and activities (which will be examined during this research).

To put the theory in context, an example of organizational decoupling can be that the organization is internally communicating that it is important for the organizational culture with a flat structure where everyone can communicate with anyone and that they are achieving such a free environment with an open office space with free seating. In reality, the senior managers are always sitting together on the higher floors in the office, and the communication is generally slow, going through several steps of the formal structure. It shows that much of the conversations needed for the senior managers are between each other, and the seating situation is efficient in the way it is being performed. The organization has therefore decoupled the reality of the day-to-day activities from what is actually being communicated internally.

2.3.2 Tight and Loose Coupling

Orton and Weick (1990) elaborate on the idea of decoupling suggesting a system that is simultaneously open and closed, indeterminate and rational, spontaneous and deliberate. Such a system is presented as a loosely coupled system. The difference between decoupling and loose coupling is therefore the following: the concept of loose coupling takes into consideration several structural dimensions, and emphasizes simultaneous coupling and decoupling, whereas the concept of decoupling is an effect that institutional isomorphism has on organizations (Orton and Weick 1990; Meyer and Rowan, 1977). More explicitly, Orton and Weick (1990) explain it as “If there is distinctiveness without responsiveness, the system is decoupled. If there is both distinctiveness and responsiveness, the system is loosely coupled” (page. 205).

According to the perspective presented by Orton and Weick (1990) a public organization, such as the Swedish Armed Forces, can consequently maintain efficiency by taking a hybrid form consisting of both tight and decoupled approaches, something they, as previously mentioned, describe as loose coupling.

2.3.3 Symbolic Adoption and Implementation

Bromley et al., (2012) employ the idea of symbolic adoption and symbolic implementation while discussing coupling processes. Symbolic adoption is window dressing without actual internal change taking place. Symbolic implementation, on the other hand, occurs when an organization incorporates the external pressure by establishing internal change such as new routines. When an organization is facing external pressure, the reaction may differ depending on factors such as organizations’ resources, skills, and knowledge (Bromley et al., 2012). For instance, symbolic adoption is more likely to occur when the level of knowledge regarding incorporating new routines or tools, is low. It does not necessarily have to be a question of if the organization has the will to incorporate new routines, but rather if it has proper skills, resources, and knowledge to successfully do so. Since the organization lacks the qualities required for incorporating the external pressure, the only thing that will be affected is the facade. Hence, the adoption is entirely symbolic. Contrary, if the organization manage to successfully implement the new routines or tools, making it a part of the organizational life, Bromley et al., (2012) argue that it often becomes symbolic since management have difficulties knowing if the new standards result in a higher level of goal achievement or not. Hence, the difference between symbolic adoption and symbolic implementation is based on the degree of incorporation: “Symbolic adoption and symbolic implementation are both driven by external pressures and confer legitimacy benefits, but the latter involves a greater degree of internal changes” (Bromley et al., 2012, page.475). Since the hypothesis of this study states that a tight coupling equals efficiency in certain public organizations, the success of activities is therefore based on adoption and implementation that together serves as both symbols but also as actual internal change. In order to erase the symbolic feature of the symbolic implementation, the implementation has to be coherent with and contribute to goal achievement. Hence, the implementation has to serve a certain purpose and create value for the organization. Otherwise, the internal activity generated by the external pressure is something the organization does without knowing why. Thus, according to our hypothesis, the displaying of the organization

has to be coherent with the implementation the external pressure has generated in order to bring value to and elevate the organization in line with overall objectives.

2.3.4 Recoupling Processes

In the context of organizational efficiency, studies that highlight organizations becoming inefficient and starting to suffer from turmoil as a result of tight coupling have been previously conducted. Hallett (2010) examines the concept “recoupling” in an elementary school context. Recoupling is the process of making the gap between the formal and informal within the organization smaller. Since this paper aims to investigate the possibility of an organization being efficient while at the same time facing minor or no decoupling, one can argue that the concept of recoupling is adequate for this paper. Moreover, since Hallett (2010) suggests that recoupling (of accountability) in an urban elementary school results in turmoil and distress for the actors involved (teachers and students), one can argue that the perspective of this paper is slightly different. Since the hypothesis of this research is that certain organizations reach a higher grade of efficiency by reducing the amount of decoupling (conducting recoupling), the outset is that recoupling would equal a reducing amount of turmoil and distress in the Swedish Armed Forces. Hence, the concept of re-coupling, turmoil and distress will be examined in this research but in a rather reversed fashion than that presented by Hallett (2010).

2.4 Consequences of Coupling Processes

Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that organizations will employ buffering strategies, separating the formal structures from the internal activities in order to maintain internal efficiency. Hence, efficiency is a consequence of decoupling. As explained by Hallett (2010) in the section above, recoupling processes in an elementary school followed by turmoil and distress which supports the claim of Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggesting that decoupling equals efficiency. There is, on the other hand, research pointing in the opposite direction which implies that a high level of decoupling may result in internal disbelief and a loss of occupational identity for the members of the organization (Rasche and Gilbert, 2015).

2.4.1 Internal Disbelief

In the context of public organizations, in this case, business schools, Rasche and Gilbert (2015) argue that there are certain conditions where decoupling is more likely to occur but also describe why decoupling may harm the organization. Even though the research conducted by Rasche and Gilbert (2015) covers different kinds of organizations (schools), in contrast with this study which solely focuses on the Swedish Armed Forces, one can argue that both (public) schools and the Swedish Armed forces have the common denominator of being public. Rasche and Gilbert (2015) suggest that “When business schools decouple responsible management education for longer periods of time, they are likely to create a situation in which organizational members stop taking relevant claims particularly seriously. This gives rise to discordant perceptions of legitimacy, that is, a mismatch between the legitimacy perceptions held by external audiences and those held by organizational insiders.” (page. 247). This is an approach to decoupling which would support our hypothesis that tight coupling is crucial for certain

organizations in order to remain efficient. Since Rasche and Gilbert (2015) furthermore suggests that a “discordant perception” (page. 247) shared by the members of the organization may result in internal disbelief for the entire occupation, one can moreover argue that the lack of internal disbelief, in the long run, may lead to inefficient personnel and an overall failure for the organization. Also, as Rasche and Gilbert (2015) suggest that decoupling may result in internal cynicism, a loss of occupational identity can be its consequence.

The theory of institutionalized organizations presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977) have developed into several other theories regarding, for instance, previously mentioned coupling processes such as recoupling. The question regarding efficiency in a firm is something that not only has to do with the amount of decoupling within an organization but with the field of study being sparingly studied, one can argue that there is a demand to examine the idea that tightly coupled organizations is automatically inefficient. The study does not seek to examine efficiency as a whole, but rather the impact that the degree of coupling has on efficiency.

3. Method

3.1 Research Approach

Since the purpose of this paper is to investigate if and, in that case, how a tightly coupled structure in a public, hierarchical organization generates legitimacy and organizational efficiency simultaneously and furthermore test the three hypotheses previously presented, a qualitative case study method was used. In qualitative research, it is the words, perceptions, and experiences of individuals or organizations that are focused and examined. The viewpoint is interpretative which means that one of the purposes of qualitative research is to gain understanding regarding how members of the socially constructed reality interpret reality and its events (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Hence, the results of this study are based on how the respondents interpret the coupling-efficiency relationship in the Swedish Armed Forces. The qualitative method is explained as a process consisting of the following six steps; 1) Issue. 2) Choice of relevant locations and examination person. 3) Gathering of data. 4) Interpretation of data. 5) Theoretical work. 6) Report of results and conclusions. On the other hand, a deductive approach was applied while conducting this research which is characterized by, based on existing theories and general principles, being able to establish conclusions within specific subjects (Patel and Davidsson, 2011). Hence, deviations from the steps presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) were made. Also, the deductive approach is usually tightly connected to quantitative studies (Bryman and Bell, 2011), why some would argue that a quantitative approach would have been more suitable for our cause. There is though research in contexts where the amount of quantitative measures is small, irrelevant or non-existing, why a quantitative approach may be unsuitable (Bitektine, 2008). The hypothesis of this study may be testing theories which according to Bryman and Bell (2011) is a typical characteristic of quantitative research, but since the purpose of this study is to investigate if and, in that case, how a tightly coupled structure generates legitimacy and organizational efficiency, one can argue that a quantitative research approach is not sufficient enough to be coherent with the purpose. Bitektine (2008) presents a different design called the “Prospective case study” and combines qualitative research with a deductive approach. It is explained as a design where “the researcher formulates a set of theory-based hypotheses in respect to the evolution of an ongoing social process and then tests these hypotheses at a predetermined follow-up time by comparing these hypotheses with the observed process outcomes” (page. 161). Since the deductive approach in qualitative research often suffers from validity problems, such as that the outcomes of the study are already known to the researches before formulating the hypothesis, Bitektine (2008) suggests that the prospective case study ensures that “hypotheses, follow-up times, and evaluation criteria (are) established in advance” (page. 63). Instead of following the steps in the deductive process presented by Bryman and Bell (2011), the two steps of the Prospective case study design presented by Bitektine (2008) were used. The first step is the preparation phase including 4 elements:

Element 1: *Formulation of the Research Question and the Selection of the Theories to Be Tested*

Element 2: *Identification of the Case Study and Methodology Selection*

Element 3: *Analysis of the Case and Formulation of the Patterns of Testable Hypotheses*

Element 4: *Formulation of criteria for outcome evaluation at Step 2.*

The hypotheses are formulated such as if the outcome is A, then it is due to the circumstance B. For instance, *the Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Equality (A), due to the tightly coupled structure (B)*. This methodology is presented by Bitektine (2008) as deterministic. It is understood that there may be other factors affecting the organizational efficiency in The Swedish Armed Forces alongside coupling processes, but with the purpose of focusing solely on the coupling-efficiency relationship, such other factors have been disregarded in this study and in the formulations of the hypotheses.

The second step presented by Bitektine (2008) is the follow up research where the outcome of the case is organized, analyzed and later presented. Moreover, in the second step, it is the hypothesis formulated in step one that are tested. In order to successfully conduct the prospective case study and due to the risk of facing validity problems, step one was first fully concluded before entering into the second step, as suggested by Bitektine (2008). Also, since this study was conducted according to the prospective case study design, one had to be aware of the risk of the study yielding results not corresponding to the pre-formulated hypotheses (Bitektine, 2008).

3.2 Case Study

With the purpose to test if and in that case how a tightly coupled structure in a public, hierarchical organization generates legitimacy and organizational efficiency simultaneously, the Case Study approach presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) has been applied. Stake (1995; cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011, page 86) suggest that the Case Study approach is suitable when trying to display the complexity and unique nature of a specific case. Stake (1995; cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011, page 86) also suggests that the choice of the case should be based on what the authors believe to be the best way possible to gain as much understanding as possible. The case this research aims to target is a Swedish, public and highly hierarchical organization. The organization has a high requirement of displaying legitimacy since it is a public, tax-funded organization. Hence, one can argue that the Swedish Armed Forces is a suitable choice since it has all the qualities that made it possible to gain sufficient understanding. The organizational structure is explicit and apparent and furthermore, the ranks within the organization are well articulated. Thus, it can be argued that the Swedish Armed Forces can be used as a general example of organizations of a similar kind. Previous research of the Swedish Armed Forces were also screened, which highlight, for instance, transformation processes and boundary work (Persson, 2010) but also model-based development within the organization (Pilemalm et al., 2012). Since the purpose of this study is neither connected to transformation processes nor model-based development, such previous research were not included in this paper.

The case study focused primarily on three parts of the organizational activity. The Swedish Armed Forces (2018), displays that much of the external communication from the organization

regarding their efficiency is based on partially the strictly hierarchical structure, partially the work regarding safety and regulations connected to the different day-to-day activities and lastly, the process of making the organization more equal. To understand whether or not the Swedish Armed Forces is displaying organizational efficiency, these three themes in the context of organizational efficiency were examined. The motives for examining three themes were first due to the in-depth investigation that was made possible by not choosing too many themes. Moreover, those three themes were what we found being the foundation of the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct since they appeared several times in different forms throughout the document. The three themes chosen were not explicitly expressed as three separate themes that the Swedish Armed Forces focuses on, but rather three themes that was found recurring the most in the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct in connection to organizational efficiency.

First, the formal structure of the organization was investigated. It was later tested if the strictly hierarchical structure and the clearly stated channels of communication were something that the members of the organization feel contributed to the organizational efficiency.

Secondly, regarding safety and regulations, the focus was put on if the regulations and controls in connection to the military activities such as sharp shooting, physical training, and vehicle activities enhance the efficiency of the organization.

Last, in the context of equality, it was tested whether or not the work that the organization is conducting within the field of achieving a more equal organization is actually affecting the efficiency. With equality, the focus was not put on the equality between co-workers crossing hierarchical borders, but rather on equality regarding race, gender, sexuality and other bases of discrimination.

3.3 Gathering of Primary Data

3.3.1 Interviews

In order to extract useful qualitative data that aimed to test the three hypotheses of this paper, 15 semi-structured interviews have been conducted. The purpose of using this technique was due to the importance of the extraction of proper data with sufficient depth in order to answer to the questions of the research but also to extract data such as the respondent's emotions, perceptions, and experiences (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Furthermore, since the answers required were not simply of yes/no-character but rather in a combination with answers to "how" a tight coupling is conducted, answers of qualitative nature were sought for. The interviews were structured with main questions as well as follow-up questions. Furthermore, as Bryman and Bell (2011) highlight, flexibility is a keyword while conducting semi-structured interviews which means that the aim is to give the respondent space to formulate her/his own answers. Furthermore, the respondents were chosen primarily on the bases of what Lind (2014) describe as adequacy sampling and later what Bryman and Bell (2011) describe as snowball sampling. Some employees were contacted and chosen based on that they serve in the position the authors

sought to investigate (soldier, squad leader, or platoon leader), and also that they appeared relevant in the context of contributing with adequate data. Later, a snowball sampling method was used since the rest of the respondents were contacted as a result of previous respondents' recommendations. There are though risks associated with conducting convenience sampling such as snowball sampling. For instance, the risk that the sample is not reflecting the entire population but rather subjects known to each other (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In order to avoid such biases, personnel with different sex, from different regiments with a varied time of service, were chosen.

In order to gain sufficient over-all data considering the organization that has been examined and as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011), one pilot interview was first conducted. To gain a first step understanding of the structure and way of work in the selected organization, questions that aimed to answer to the overall picture of the organization were formulated. The main reasons for the pilot interview to be conducted were to gain an overall view of the organizational structure in order to conclude if it was possible to carry through the study and furthermore if the theoretical frames were applicable to the organization in mind. The interview gave us insight into different areas of expertise and the organizational structure. The interview was mostly of informal character and it was decided to let the respondent be aware of the main themes this study was set out to investigate.

When the pilot interview had been conducted and the required data had been extracted, 14 more interviews were held. Personnel from nine regiments were interviewed within three positions: soldier, squad leader, and platoon leader. The time of service of the respondents differed from seven months to ten years. Six interviews were conducted face-to-face during visits at the regiments. The purpose of using this method was to be able to extract non-formulated data such as; emotions, facial expressions, and body language (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Seven interviews were conducted using telephone and one was conducted through the communication tool Skype. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), telephone interviews are enclosed with benefits such as reducing (traveling) costs, especially when the respondent is recondite. Since some of the interviewed personnel were based in distance regiments, telephone interviews were better suited. Also, since some of the respondents were deployed in hostile territories (such as Timbuktu, Mali), it would be impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews. The disadvantages of telephone interviews were in those cases considered, such as missing out on body language and gestures (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The length of the interviews was between 20 - 40 minutes per person. The questions were based on three themes: Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations, and Equality. Every theme served as a headline for the questions to follow. The questions were formulated in a way that gave the respondents room for answering freely. Thus, the questions were based on the themes above but the respondent was free to answer in which way she/he felt fit. The method of using themes but at the same time give the respondent the freedom to answer is suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011). There are though risks associated with conducting interviews. Yin (2014) argues that there is a possibility that the respondents adjust their answers on the bases of what they think the interviewer is seeking. Also, since it is the employees of the Swedish Armed Forces that serve as responders, there is a risk that the answers are biased in favor of the organization. Hence, personnel from different levels of the

hierarchy (soldier, squad leader, and platoon leader) were interviewed in order to get a representative result and to avoid such biases.

After conducting all interviews, the data regarding the respondents were compiled with the purpose of getting an overview. Every respondent was anonymous and presented using abbreviations. Soldiers got the abbreviation S with the following number, squad leaders got the abbreviation SL with the following number and platoon leaders got the abbreviation PL with the following number. Hence, data regarding the respondent could be followed up in the table below.

RESPONDENT	SEX	POSITION	TIME IN SERVICE	REGIMENT	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
S1	Male	Soldier	7 months	Göteborgs garnison	Face-to-face
S2	Male	Soldier	7 months	Göteborgs garnison	Face-to-face
S3	Female	Soldier	7 months	Göteborgs garnison	Face-to-face
S4	Male	Soldier	7 months	Göteborgs garnison	Face-to-face
S5	Male	Soldier	9 years	Ledningsregementet	Telephone
S6	Male	Soldier	5 years	Luftvärnsregementet	Face-to-face
S7	Male	Soldier	3 years	Luftvärnsregementet	Telephone
S8	Male	Soldier	6 years	Ledningsregementet	Telephone
S9	Female	Soldier	5 years	Skaraborgs regemente	Telephone
SL1	Male	Squad leader	10 years	Skaraborgs flygfottilj	Telephone
SL2	Male	Squad leader	6 years	Camp Nobel, Mali	Skype
SL3	Male	Squad leader	4 years	Livgardet	Telephone
SL4	Female	Squad leader	6 years	Försvarsmedicincentrum	Telephone
PL1	Male	Platoon leader	6 years	Göteborgs garnison	Face-to-face
PL2	Male	Platoon leader	10 years	Ledningsregementet	Telephone

Table 1. Compilation of respondents

As can be seen in Table 1, the total amount of male respondents is twelve and female respondents sums up to three, which closely corresponds to the balance between gender in the organization as a whole (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2018). Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that if a sample of a population is to be representative, it has to mirror the organization but at a miniature scale. Hence, one can argue that the sample of this study is adequate and representative. On the other hand, one can suggest that a larger sample of females would be preferable in order to reach an accurate reflection of the equality in the Swedish Armed Forces.

As suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011), with the purpose of extending the memory, not missing out on relevant data and facilitate for the transcribing and coding process, recording devices were used during the interviews. During seven of the telephone interviews, a studio microphone was recording the entire time in order to facilitate for the transcribing process. During the remaining eight interviews, the recording device on the telephone was used due to a lack of accessibility of the studio devices. According to the principle of approval (Bryman and Bell, 2011), and as will be pronounced later in this section, the respondents have been informed about and been given their consent for the interview to be recorded.

3.4 Gathering of Secondary Data

3.4.1 Previous Research

With the target of examining how the organizational efficiency in a strictly hierarchical organization is being affected by coupling processes and furthermore examine if minor or absolute absence of decoupling in public organizations with major requirements of displaying legitimacy equals inefficiency, existing research in the field of institutional theory with a focus on keywords such as decoupling and organizational efficiency were screened.

3.4.2 The Swedish Armed Forces' Code of Conduct

With the ambition of gaining a deeper insight in the military profession and furthermore examine what is being formulated to the public by the organization, the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct, formulated by the Swedish Armed Forces headquarters, has been reviewed. Since it is an open document published on the Swedish Armed Forces' website, the information could easily be extracted. The document has served a supportive role during this research since its function was to support/reject the information retrieved from the interviews. While using the internet as a source of documents, such as the Swedish Armed Forces' website, one has to be critical and apply the criteria presented by Scott (1990) regarding authenticity, reliability and the everlasting change of the internet. Furthermore, the focus has been put on three themes in the Code of Conduct presented by the Swedish Armed Forces (2016). Those themes are Organizational Structure, Safety & Regulations, and Equality. The motives for examining three themes were first due to the in-depth investigation that was made possible by not choosing too many themes. Also, those three themes were found being the foundation of the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct since they appeared in different forms throughout the document.

3.5 Ethical Principles

During this research, the four basic ethical principles presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) have carefully been followed alongside the principles of Code of Conduct presented by the Market Research Society (2014).

3.5.1 Injury or Danger

The first ethical principle presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) states that "Research resulting in injury or danger for the participants is unacceptable" (page. 144). Hence, neither the employees of the Swedish Armed Forces nor the organization as a whole have been exposed for any risk regarding physical danger, loss of self-esteem, stress or discouragement. The Market Research Society's (2014) Code of Conduct suggests "Researchers shall ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities" (page. 3). The interviews were held in a professional manner but with a relaxed approach with the purpose of making the participant feel as comfortable as possible.

3.5.2 The Principle of Approval

The second principal presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) states “There will be no lack of approval from the part of the participants” (page. 47). During this research, the respondents have been asked for approval before conducting an interview. Every participant was notified that their involvement in this study was entirely voluntarily. There has furthermore occurred no veiled observation which means that the participants have been aware of the observation taking place. Moreover, as the Market Research Society's (2014) Code of Conduct suggests “Members must ensure that participants are informed about any recording, monitoring or observation at recruitment and at the beginning of a data collection process” (page. 17). Hence, before conducting an interview with the employees at the Swedish Armed Forces, notifications of the eventual use of recordings devices have been made.

3.5.3 Personal Life and Confidential Information

The third principal presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) states: “There will be no encroachment of the personal life” (page. 150). Some of the respondents serve in units with high requirements of confidentiality, why information such as names, precise unit, and location have been excluded from this report. Hence, confidential information has been handled carefully and with respect. Before publishing this report, a decision was made not to use any names of the participants but instead use abbreviations such as S1, SL1, and PL1. This decision was based on, first, that using names are of no use for the purpose of this study and secondly, that some of the respondents serve in highly confidential units domestic and abroad why publishing their names might endanger their personal lives.

3.5.4 False Reflections, Fraud or Withholding of Relevant Information

The last ethical principle presented by Bryman and Bell (2011) states that participants of the study shall not be deceived in any way which means that the purpose of the study has to be explicitly formulated and understood by the participants before conducting an interview. The Market Research Society's (2014) Code of Conduct suggests: “Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships” (page. 3). Hence, a straightforward communication without beautifying the purpose of this study has been made with the respondents beforehand which gave the respondents the opportunity to decide on continuing the interview or not. Also, the respondents have been notified regarding this study’s definitions of terms such as, for instance, organizational efficiency, in order to avoid misunderstandings or false reflections.

3.6 Processing and Analyzing

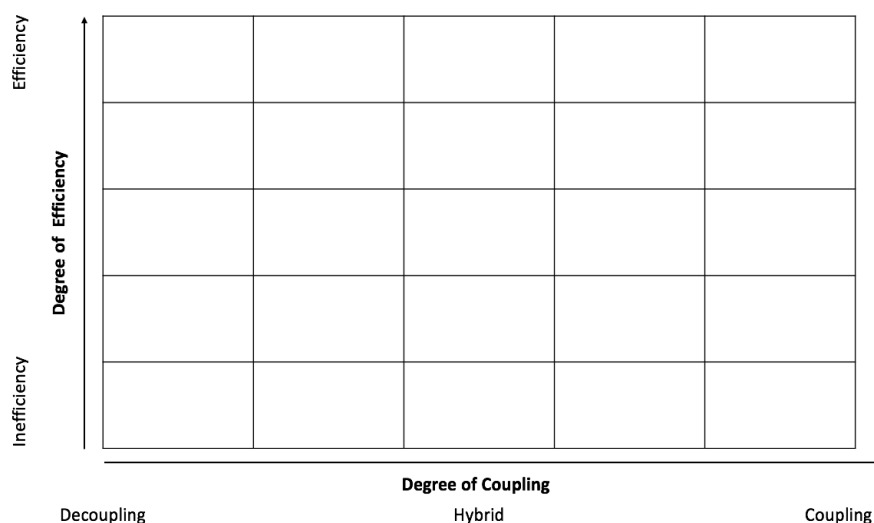
3.6.1 Transcribing and Coding

Once all the primary data and secondary data were extracted, the important parts were transcribed. Since the interviews were held in Swedish, the data were first transcribed to the original language of the interviews and then translated. Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that the

transcribing process is time demanding why we avoided transcribing everything and instead adopted a selective approach regarding transcribing. For instance, talk recorded before the actual questions were not transcribed since it did not contribute to the purpose of this study. With the purpose of organizing and getting an overview of the extracted data, the procedure of thematic analysis presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used. In order to code the extracted data and to “indicate potential patterns and... identify segments of data” (page. 19), Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest using colored pens (manually or in computer tools), to highlight the important parts of the data. Hence, different colors were used to make it easy to separate the data belonging to the three different themes of this study (Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations, and Equality).

3.6.2 The Coupling-Efficiency Matrix

With the ambition to analyze and overview the results generated from the coding process presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) regarding the interviews and secondary data, a matrix was produced. The Matrix has been conducted by the authors Emmesjö and Ringström (2019) and served as an analyzing tool. Its purpose was to investigate the connection between different levels of coupling and organizational efficiency. For each theme (Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations, and Equality), the answers of the respondents were matched with the statements of the Swedish Armed Forces’ (2016) Code of Conduct. If, for instance, the Code of Conduct states that employees follow safety regulations and that it is contributing to organizational efficiency, and the answers of a respondent regarding Safety & Regulations support this claim, the result in the matrix would be a high degree of coupling and a high degree of organizational efficiency. The answers regarding the three chosen themes were compiled in the matrix with the purpose of determining if clusters appeared which possibly could imply that there was a connection between the focused theme (Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations, and Equality) and organizational efficiency. Hence, the overview generated by the matrix served a supportive role in understanding the coupling-efficiency relationship and was used as an internal tool for an overview. Since the answers put in the matrix could be argued as being arbitrary, the matrix was not used to present the results in the analysis.



Model 1 (Emmesjö and Ringström, 2019)

4. Empirical Evidence

The empirical data used during this research originate from:

- a) primary data such as result from interviews with personnel in the Swedish Armed Forces.
- b) secondary data such as previous research and data from the Swedish Armed Forces' (2014) Code of Conduct.

4.1 The Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct formulated by the Swedish Armed Forces (2016) is a document that serves as a framework for the employees of the organization regarding how to act in the military profession as well as an open document for the public to read. During this research, the focus has been put on three themes in the Code of Conduct; 1) Organizational structure 2) Safety & Regulations and, 3) Equality.

4.1.1 Organizational Structure

The Swedish Armed Forces has a hierarchical framework reaching all the way from the supreme commander to the private. According to the Code of Conduct, the hierarchical system is a fundamental part of the organizational efficiency in the Swedish Armed Forces. This includes that instructions from supreme officers are being followed and respected (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2016). In the Code of Conduct, regarding the importance of following orders, the organization states “That decisions, orders, and rules are respected and followed is a prerequisite for achieving results” (page. 23). Hence, according to the organization, the maintaining of a hierarchical structure and furthermore the loyalty to the system is crucial for organizational efficiency.

4.1.2 Safety & Regulations

The military profession is associated with risky activities such as handling of weapons and sharp ammunition. Regarding safety and regulations, there are various examples of how much value the Swedish Armed Forces puts into following safety regulations to minimize risk and remain organizational efficient. Below is an explicit statement retrieved from the Code of Conduct by the Swedish Armed Forces (2016):

We are trustworthy and effective by being faithful to what we do, following our instructions, trusting our ability, and saying what it is, without beautifying or concealing reality. We care about ourselves and each other. We have a high security-awareness and take into account and minimize the risks in our business. (page. 23)

Hence, the organization states that being true to regulations and saying what it is without beautifying anything is what creates organizational efficiency. Also, the Swedish Armed Forces (2016) implies that security-awareness within the organization is high.

4.1.3 Equality

The organization states that an active and sustainable development process is taking place with the purpose of creating an equal organizational environment (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2018). Moreover, the Swedish Armed Forces states that it is to be perceived as an organization that treats everyone equally. This perception is not only to be shared by the external parties, but also by the actual employees of the Swedish Armed Forces. An equality plan has been formulated and can as well as the Code of Conduct be found on the Swedish Armed Forces' website. Some of the paragraphs in this document states for instance that the equality work aims to increase the number of women in the Swedish Armed Forces (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2018). The organization furthermore implies that by creating an equal organization, the organizational efficiency is elevated: "The work on gender equality and equality simply aims to make the Swedish Armed Forces' operations better and more effective." (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2018).

To sum up, the organizational structure, the compliance of safety and regulations and the process of making the organization equal are according to the Swedish Armed Forces (2016, 2018) three elements that contribute to a higher degree of organizational efficiency.

4.2 Compilation of Interviews with Employees of the Swedish Armed Forces

As seen in Table 1, 15 interviews have been conducted with personnel within the three professions; soldier, squad leader, and platoon leader. Since the personnel is presented with abbreviations (S, SL, and PL), information regarding the responder can be found in table 1 if required. The questions asked are formulated based on what is being presented in the Code of Conduct conducted by the Swedish Armed Forces (2016) and the information presented in the section above.

4.2.1 Organizational Structure

Below are the perceptions of soldiers, squad leaders and platoon leaders regarding organizational structure presented based on the interviews of the employees of the Swedish Armed Forces.

4.2.1.1 Soldiers' Perceptions

For the majority of the respondents in the occupation of soldier, the organizational structure appears clear and hierarchical. S3 describes: "Clear. An extra star equals more power but everyone respects everyone. For me who is lowest in the ranks, I can really distinguish the hierarchy."

For some of the soldiers, particularly those who have served for a longer period of time, for instance, S5, the perception is that there is a hierarchical structure but that a transformation has been taking place in the previous years and still is taking place. S5 argues that the structure still

is present but that it has become a more respectful atmosphere. Another soldier proposes that the structure is a bit different, not due to the changes over time, but due to which company you are based in, and also that the size of the company plays a significant role.

It's a bit different in the company where I come from. At my department we're pretty few employees, so I can talk directly with the company leader, even though I shouldn't, I still can, because we have such a good climate within our company. (S9)

The majority of the soldiers argue that employees stay true to the structure and that orders are being respected, particularly when it comes to real-life situations and drill exercises. Some answers are short and concise and state that employees comply with current regulations. Other respondents are though arguing that there are situations where the mode is on and that in other situations the mode is off during service. For instance, S2 explains that in the beginning, no informal talk between officers and recruits was taking place but that the atmosphere started to loosen up between duties as the time passed by: "We started to talk more informally when there were no missions or we were off duty, one began to realize when it had to be formal or not."

S2 is though urgent to point out that a mode off state only is current at breaks such as lunch and other off duty-activities. Once actual work is being done, she argues that the level of compliance to regulations and the hierarchical structure is high.

In the context of organizational efficiency, the overall answer is that the hierarchical structure contributes to an explicit and evident picture of how day-to-day activities are supposed to be conducted. The general idea of soldiers (S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, and S7) is that the hierarchical structure is contributing to organizational efficiency since the ranks are clear and positions are well formulated. Hence, employees know who is in charge of specific areas. S2 gives a practical example of how the organizational structure contributes to a higher level of organizational efficiency and explains that every week, one recruit in the platoon is selected to be the head of recruits. The intention is for the head of recruits to serve in an informational role, communicating the officers' intentions to the recruits. Since recruits spend all hours of the day at camp during basic training, officers are not present at all times to answer questions or support the recruits, the head of recruits will be in charge of the group and be prepared to answer eventual questions. S2 argues that organizational efficiency increases and the solving of day-to-day tasks is facilitated by the head of recruit function since the communication line is clear.

S5 has a different approach. While suggesting that the organizational structure contributes to organizational efficiency, he argues that there are errors on an individual basis. He suggests that some individuals misuse their positions, drawing the line of their management beyond what regulations are stating, making the activities dull and inflexible. On one hand, he argues that a transformation is taking place resulting in a decreasing amount of such dull behavior but on the other hand that the phenomenon still is present, just not in the same amount.

Most of the respondents (S1, S2, S4, S7, S8) argue that making the organizational structure flatter would result in a decreasing amount of organizational efficiency since it would result in

chaos. S7 suggests that a flat structure would be suitable for some organizations, but that the Swedish Armed Forces is not one of them. S3, on the other hand, suggests that there are some complications regarding the structure. For instance that recruits may not dare to communicate to superior officers or soldiers even though that what they would have to say may have been in favor of the organizational efficiency. S5 exemplifies: “Some (recruits) maybe don’t dare to address someone because they have a higher rank. Otherwise, it works pretty well.”

S9 mentions that the suitable structure differs depending on which company one is based in. She believes that a flat structure would suit a smaller company well, but also that such a flat structure is not something that would be applicable to larger groups and companies.

I think we have a much better cohesion and also better structure, but in a different way, because we’re allowed to take more responsibility, and that drives all the soldiers. If you’re allowed to take more responsibility it means something, that you’re doing something right. I think our company has it better than many others, much due to the fact that the soldiers are allowed to take more responsibility. (S9)

4.2.1.2 Squad Leaders’ Perceptions

For the majority of the respondents in the occupation of squad leaders, the organizational structure appears clear and hierarchical. The squad leaders describe that they are responsible for groups of between 8-10 soldiers. Moreover, they suggest that they are receiving directions from superior officers such as lieutenants or captains. Some of the squad leaders, S2 for instance, who at the time of the interview is deployed on a mission abroad, suggests that once the group is facing real-life tasks, the compliance to regulations and hierarchical structure is essential.

Absolutely that I’d say to 100%. When it comes to critical situations, it is the superior leader who makes decisions and the soldiers who perform the tasks. So when there are operations going on, one is shaping up. It does not matter in the same way when you are off duty, you can talk to majors and captains as well. (S2)

S4, who is in charge of a group in a back-up military force supports this statement by suggesting that even though the organizational environment in the back-up force is more relaxed than in the main organization, once conducting real-life tasks such as tracking of missing people or other search and rescue operations, the organizational structure is being followed.

S1 argues that there are situations when regulations and line of communications are totally ignored. He suggests that when an employee is perceived to be offended by, for instance, a superior officer, the employee has the right to ignore the line of communication to seek support from someone else. Apart from that, S1 believes that in 99 times out of 100, the organizational structure is being followed.

All respondents in the occupation of squad leaders argue that a relationship between the organizational structure and organizational efficiency exists in one way or another. SL2 argues that someone has to be in charge in order for the organization to remain efficient.

I think the hierarchy helps, at least in sharp situations. It would not have worked if it was a completely flat organization since I believe that in that case shared responsibility is no responsibility. Then there is no one who gets a hold of things. (SL2)

On the other hand, S1 is suggesting that the organization is efficient, but that the layers in the hierarchy have to be reduced in order to reach a faster decision making progress. He argues: “We are effective, but sometimes things get stuck in the bureaucracy, that is, there must be faster ways to make decisions.”

Also, SL4 is suggesting that the democratic way isn't suitable for this type of organization.

In this particular business, it contributes to efficiency I would say. I have been involved with platoon leaders who have wanted to make democratic decisions about everything. It does not work, you get stuck, things are happening too fast in this business. It's really frustrating. Especially when you are out in the field. (SL4)

Even though SL4 is arguing that the hierarchical structure is suitable in the operational activities, she is on the other hand suggesting that there are contexts where it is not. She believes that in the context of the working environment and equality, the organization would benefit from a more listening approach where the questions that are taken into account are on the basis of what one has experienced and not what rank you are in.

4.2.1.3 Platoon Leaders' Perceptions

The platoon leaders agree that the structure is clear. PL1 explicitly argues that the structure is important for the organization to become more determinate: “It is decided who is responsible for what. We have our ranks. It is important that it is clear who is in charge because then we become more determinate.”

Furthermore, both of the respondents suggest that regulations and hierarchy are being followed but are at the same time highlighting that when off duty, the structure is not strict in the same way as it is when conducting actual day-to-day tasks and missions. Moreover, PL2 is suggesting that the line of communication sometimes is ignored since there are too many layers between him and the individual he seeks to communicate with. PL2 also suggests that once that specific communication has been reached, the organization is quick to reconnect to the original structure. At the same time, he is arguing that the organization can remain efficient since the organizational structure provides intelligibility. PL1 support this statement by pointing out that he knows that with a flatter structure, the day-to-day activities would be too messy to perform: “I know it would become messy. I think that makes it very much easier that we have it the way we have it now.”

4.2.2 Safety & Regulations

Below are the perceptions of soldiers, squad leaders and platoon leaders regarding Safety & Regulations presented, based on the interviews of the employees of the Swedish Armed Forces.

4.2.2.1 Soldiers' Perceptions

The soldiers all agree that safety is something that is very important, and something that the organization stresses in every moment of the daily work. Illustrations that is recurring is mostly regarding regulations in connection to sharp shooting and vehicle exercises. Many of the soldiers also mention that visitations and security briefs before exercises are always conducted, which include information regarding what should be done if something goes wrong and how to perform the exercise in a safe manner.

When it comes to sharp shooting, and also shooting without real ammunition, we always have security briefings before every shooting. Whether it is on the shooting range or out somewhere in the terrain, there are always safety walkthroughs beforehand. In this way, everyone knows who has the security phone, which pocket the phone is in if you would need it, who is in charge of the exercise, where the medical supplies are, etc. It is strictly controlled. It is the same thing regarding driving vehicles. We are often visited, and before the evening we hang out lightsticks on the cars in order to know where the cars are. It is very strict with security. (S5)

S7 explains that the risk with every exercise also is something that is seen upon with great precaution and is analyzed and briefed before any exercise starts.

Well safety-wise on the shooting range, you do a risk analysis just before you start the shooting. You make a risk area, submit it to the exercise department so the shooting limits drawn up correspond to the exercise and safety criteria. (S7)

The general perception of soldiers is that regulations are followed very strictly regarding safety. The soldiers discuss that most of the employees follow regulations by their own will, but also that they are heavily monitored during exercises.

They (the officers) stick close by, and always have an eye on us. We are pretty few people shooting so they can also watch specific individuals. In this way, they can see where we aim, etc. They have us under control, I'd say. (S3)

The soldiers have a hard time coming up with any examples regarding when regulations are not followed. S3 exemplifies: "It's not something that I've encountered yet, it's followed perfectly according to me."

S5 discusses how the organization as a whole is very strict regarding the controls, and when someone does not follow the regulations, the problem lies with specific individuals, and not the organization as a whole.

It's a bit difficult to say. I think we always stick to it. It is the practice leader's responsibility that we must do. The problem lies with individuals, and it can be linked to the hierarchical thing we talked about before. Not everyone dares to raise their hand if they do not understand. (S5)

The soldiers are unanimous and have a clear understanding of what could happen if regulations are not complied with. S3 and S8 comment that not following regulations could lead to life-threatening injuries and in a worst case scenario even death.

The soldiers all agree that the way the organization currently is working with safety and regulations is solid. When questioned regarding if the organization could work in another way to make everyday work more efficient, the soldiers seem to agree that the way it is performed today also is the preferable way. S8 moreover argues that even though it might be a bit much with the regulations sometimes, it is still the best way to do things: “I find that work regarding security sometimes can be a bit stiff, but I don’t think that changing safety regulations would increase the organizational efficiency.”

4.2.2.2 Squad Leaders’ Perceptions

The squad leaders were all unanimous in the perception that safety is something widely important in every aspect of their job. SL1 exemplifies:

According to our safety regulations, the one who’s in charge of the shooting also has the responsibility regarding safety aspects connected to it. For instance, before a shooting session, we examine the weapon, checking that it is clean and that the safety switch works. We control the shooting ranges, and the surrounding terrain so that the bullets can’t bounce off. We minimize the risks. During the shooting sessions, we always oversee the security with either an officer per soldier, or an officer per group, so there is always someone responsible for the security. (SL1)

SL3 also points out that the safety precautions if something were to happen is something that is discussed prior to an exercise.

There is a security walkthrough every time as well so that it is very clear which car that is our transport vehicle to the hospital, who notifies the guard, who gets in touch with the ambulance, where to meet up the ambulance. There are clearly pointed out sites regarding where to go if something would happen. It’s very important that all of this is followed if something would happen. (SL3)

The squad leaders agree that regulations most often are followed, but as previously discussed by the soldiers, SL1 mentions that on an individual level, there might be people who do not stick to every single rule, but that the organization always stresses the importance of it.

You always try to follow it, but at an individual level, some people can, of course, be a bit careless, but from the organizational view, you always stress that the safety must be followed. Then what each individual chooses to do, it is impossible to control everything. (SL1)

SL3 furthermore discusses how the people in charge of exercises always support each other to make sure that everything is performed in the safest way possible.

Most of all, I listen very carefully on the safety walkthrough and think about if there’s anything that hasn’t been mentioned that needs to be said. And sometimes I’m responsible for sharpshootings, and then I’m very meticulous and ask someone else to read through my plans to see if I’ve missed anything. And I’d say everyone does that for each other. (SL3)

The squad leaders have a hard time coming up with examples regarding when the organization does not stick to regulations. They are also unanimous in the perception that the organization

cannot step away from current regulations and agree that the organization is efficient in the context of safety. They are moreover in agree that regulations are crucial in everything that they do. While agreeing on the importance of regulations, SL3 also argues that there might be a safer way to work with groups in connection to the exercises:

If the officers that are responsible for the exercise, briefs the squad leaders, and then the squad leaders can do the controls on just their own group. Then it could be safer, because the soldiers are more likely to speak up about something that they've forgotten to the squad leader, instead of for the whole platoon. (SL3)

4.2.2.3 Platoon Leaders' Perceptions

The two platoon leaders agree that a lot of work is being done in the context of safety and regulations. Both provide us with practical, detailed illustrations of how the organization operates and PL1 starts to illustrate how sharpshooting at the shooting range is conducted:

When we are at the shooting range, the soldiers have superior officers watching them so that the soldiers do not do anything wrong. And you start quite calm and careful with them. We have a security briefing for the soldiers. They get a lot of practical, dry exercise before we add real ammunition. The soldiers must practice without ammunition first, in order to be able to handle the weapon safely. We educate them regarding risks. For instance; what are the risks with the weapon? We teach them that they really have to think about where they are pointing their weapon, where they have their fingers, to keep the safety on, you know, that the weapon should always be secure, and that the finger always should be outside the trigger. (PL1)

PL1 moreover illustrates how superior officers are screening the recruits to determine if they are in condition to be shooting or not:

We have visitation before and after sharpshooting where the soldiers are doing a gun control. We check their weapons, check their equipment, check the ammunition. We check if the shooter can carry out the shooting and if he is tired or alert. (PL1)

PL2 supports this statement by pointing out that in-depth risk analysis is being conducted before shooting activities:

The security is most important. We do an in-depth risk analysis, so that all parts, for example, before a sharpshooting session, a risk analysis is conducted, and then you have to adapt the exercise to that analysis, I feel that security is very high. (PL2)

In the context of other military activities such as physical exercise and vehicle activities, PL1 is describing safety as equally important as when conducting shooting exercises. He portrays, for instance, that drivers of vehicles have to be well rested before mastering the vehicle. Also, he illustrates that every recruit is being tested and is going through a health examination to determine if the individual is appropriate for military service. Moreover, during basic training, there is a load plan where the weights that the recruits are carrying (such as weapons, backpacks and other equipment) are being gradually added to make sure no one gets injured.

Both PL1 and PL2 suggest that regulations are being complied with overall. PL1 argues though that there always will be individuals who oppose current regulations because they believe that they know better themselves. The proportion of individuals not complying with safety regulations is though minimal in comparison with those who do. PL1 is clear when pointing out that when it comes to activities such as real-life operations and sharp shooting, regulations have to be followed, otherwise it can be lethal. This is something that is pointed out by PL2 as well: “Yes, it is a dangerous business if you step away from the security regulations. It can lead to serious injuries and in the worst case, death.”

If an employee does not stick to regulations, both PL1 and PL2 explains that a report is written and an investigation is conducted in order to find out why the employee did not comply. Later, the work is refocused with the purpose of trying to prevent similar events in the future. PL1 describes that in order to avoid accidents related to lack of drivers’ sleep, the last day of exercises now serves as a recovery day, making the drivers well rested when it is time to drive back to camp.

The platoon leaders have a hard time coming up with any examples regarding if there’s any way of working more efficiently in the context of safety and regulations. PL1 and PL2 are unanimous in arguing that if one tries to speed up shooting sessions or other activities, the safety would be suffering, which is not an option. Also, they suggest that a lot of the responsibility is on the individual level.

4.2.3 Equality

Below are the perceptions of soldiers, squad leaders and platoon leaders regarding equality presented, based on the interviews of the employees of the Swedish Armed Forces.

4.2.3.1 Soldiers’ Perceptions

The general view from the soldiers is that a lot of work is being conducted regarding equality, and especially regarding communication to new possible recruits. S8 exemplify by discussing the different campaigns the organization is performing to recruit new personnel: “A lot of work is being done with external communication with information campaigns, and also, there is NOAK.”

S9 is also discussing the different campaigns: “The organization works a lot with these questions. It’s campaign after campaign going on. They want the organization to mirror society as a whole.”

Many of the soldiers feel that they do not think about equality in the organization that much since they have never felt discriminated or treated in a different way. S3 exemplifies: “We don’t even want to go to those meetings (NOAK) because we get treated well, great actually. (...) none of us have been treated worse just because we are girls.”

The soldiers give examples of when they have taken part in the work that the organization is doing and are discussing different lectures and seminars held for the cause. S5 also mentions that these lectures are mandatory, which means that everyone is attending: “I have also been to

lectures about it even though I myself have not been involved in planning it. In most cases, such lectures are also mandatory. We are supposed to attend. That's just how it is.”

S9 proposes that the work being conducted internally isn't that extensive, but that it isn't a problem because everyone is already treated equally.

Internally? From my experience, not that much. They already treat us equal, and I guess that's what everybody wants. No one wants to be treated differently in any way once you're a part of the organization. (S9)

Regarding how equality work affects the soldiers and organizational efficiency, the picture was vaguer. For example, S3 and S5 conclude that it has an effect, whereas S5 mentioned that it does not affect him at a personal level at all.

4.2.3.2 Squad Leaders' Perceptions

The perception of the work with equality is very clear from all 4 squad leaders. Overall, the perception is that the organization is trying very hard to make it more equal. SL1, SL2, and SL3 are all agreeing on that point. SL2 states: “I would say they are trying very hard. And I wouldn't say I'm experiencing inequality in any way.”

SL4's perception is different. She is describing how it all changed for her from being a recruit, to serve in the position she is in today:

I have never felt more equal than when I was a recruit because then I was just a recruit. As soon as I started working I was back to being a woman again.... I know a lot of women who have left the Swedish Armed Forces because they couldn't take it anymore because it is a macho culture and you have to put on a pretty hard exterior. I personally have the experience of only having male colleagues and that I can't be friends with any of them, because then it is like we are a couple. Because we're talking about other things than tanks. It gets pretty tough after a while. (SL4)

SL4 continues by discussing how the organization has changed during the career, and some problems the organization is facing.

So what has changed is that there are more and more women who are applying and are being accepted, and in the long term it will increase gender equality. After all, the problem is when women do not stay in leading positions because they cannot cope with the climate. If you have an organization where everyone in leading positions is men then you never become more than a soldier as a woman. I have also learned that people do not listen to female leaders. If the organization manages to get women higher up in the ranks then I think that more people experience it as equal. I think the basic problem in the Swedish Armed Forces is based on the fact that the male commanders do not have any female colleagues at the same level. (SL4)

The squad leaders also give illustrations of when they have taken part in the equality work done by the organization. SL2 gives an example of the different lectures held: “They lecture and talk a lot at school. But from what I've understood is that women don't want to participate in it.”

SL4 continues to discuss the perception that the organizations' work has changed from the start of her career.

Yes, I have been to lectures about our core values and been to NOAK meetings and I have done such things but unfortunately I find that it is something that the organization works with during the basic training but when you start working in the organization it turns into high chaparral again. It feels like you

are showing all that externally because it is important with the first impression, but then it feels like we're letting it go because it does not fit in the real business of the Swedish Armed Forces. (SL4)

Moreover, the squad leaders discuss how the work the organization is putting in has affected them regarding efficiency. SL3 mentions that it has not changed in the previous years, but also mentions that it is due to the fact that it already is a very equal organization: "From my point of view, I feel that it has been the same since I started (...) we don't make a difference between who is who."

4.2.3.3 Platoon Leaders' Perceptions

The Platoon leaders perception of how the organization is working with equality is also discussed, and the general idea from both PL1 and PL2 is that the organization is working with it continually through lectures and campaigns. PL1 also mentions that the organization does not accept people that do not share the values of equality, and that an equal mindset is something that every member of the organization should have.

Everyone must have good core values in the Swedish Armed Forces. That's important. Otherwise, you shouldn't be here at all. It doesn't matter if you are male or female, black or white. The Swedish Armed Forces is a place for everyone. We have this diversity view, that everyone should find their place in the organization. (PL1)

PL1 moreover discusses how the work regarding equality is affecting him. Not only is it creating a more equal organization in regards to numbers but it is also creating a more friendly environment where one can express their own personality.

It feels good. Because it has made it easier to be myself. A little like what I told you in the beginning. Well, you should be this way and an officer should be that way. If that is how you should be in the Swedish Armed Forces and otherwise you don't fit in; no, it's not like that. Everyone can be themselves. And I think that is important. (PL1)

Furthermore, PL1 exemplifies what he thinks is the most important contributor to organizational efficiency:

What is the most important thing? According to my opinion, it is that we continue to work on equality and a diversity view. Everyone should be able to find their place in the Swedish Armed Forces, everyone should. I think that everyone should be allowed to participate. But that, of course, is not all, but suitable individuals with the right knowledge, and that means that we will create a better attraction to the Swedish Armed Forces if we have both men and women. (PL1)

5. Analysis

The focus in the analysis is put on the three themes; Organizational structure, Safety & Regulations, and Equality. First, a potential match between the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct and the perceptions of respondents is investigated. Later, the connection between coupling and organizational efficiency is examined. The same procedure is repeated in every theme.

5.1 Organizational Structure

Orton and Weick (1990) propose an organizational system that is spontaneous and deliberate at the same time, something they present as a loosely coupled system which emphasizes simultaneous coupling and decoupling and propose that “effectiveness from a strategy perspective is attained by conforming to the coupling patterns dictated by a combination of environment and strategy.” (page. 215). Hence, an organization such as the Swedish Armed Forces can according to the theory presented by Orton and Weick (1990) be efficient by partially sticking to their strategy, and partially adapting to what happens at a specific moment, and at that time stepping away from what initially is regulated.

The general perception from the soldiers, the squad leaders, and the platoon leaders imply that the hierarchy is needed to remain organizational efficient since the ranks are clear and positions are well formulated. The respondents' answers moreover imply that a flatter organizational structure would lead to misunderstandings and chaos. SL4 exemplifies and illustrates an example of platoon leaders who have tried to make democratic decisions, which have led to the group getting stuck in decision making. Such perceptions are a match with the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) claim regarding the importance of the organizational structure in the Code of Conduct.

Even though the general perception is that the hierarchy is strictly followed, there are some situations where the structure is being ignored. PL2 suggests that the line of communication sometimes is ignored due to the many layers between himself and the one he seeks to communicate with, but at the same time argues that the organization remains efficient because the structure provides intelligibility in many other aspects. SL1 also suggests that the line of communication sometimes is disregarded but that the organization is quick when it comes to reconnecting to the original structure. Such a reconnecting procedure is presented by Hallett (2010) as recoupling. Hallett (2010) suggests that recoupling in certain situations may result in chaos and turmoil. This study implies otherwise since employees in the Swedish Armed Forces reconnect to the original structure in order to avoid disobedience and chaos. Another situation is described by S9 who mentions that the line of communication sometimes is disregarded in her company, which actually makes the company more efficient. She is at the same time clear with the fact that stepping aside from the structure is something not suitable for the organization as a whole, but rather something applicable to smaller groups.

The illustrations presented above where organizations take the form as a hybrid between coupling and decoupling are in line with what Orton and Weick (1990) describe as a loosely coupled system but in a tighter coupled way rather than decoupled.

Another problem that appears regarding the organizational structure is that the image of the hierarchical structure sometimes makes individuals in the organization not dare to speak up to people in the organization with a higher rank, something that both S5, as well as SL3 argue. Hence, as Orton and Weick (1990) suggest, while sticking to the initial strategy is something important in most moments for the organization, the environment sometimes allows for more spontaneous reactions to remain organizational efficient, which is proven by the fact that the line of communication is ignored at times and later reconnected. At the same time, the structure provides the organization with the intelligibility to deal with the day-to-day activities.

The coupling-efficiency relationship in the context of organizational structure is not completely clear, but the overall perception from the respondents is that the hierarchical structure is needed to remain an efficient organization, but that some situations allow for a more direct line of communication.

5.2 Safety & Regulations

The Swedish Armed Forces states that staying true to regulations and saying what it is without beautifying anything is what creates organizational efficiency and furthermore that the security awareness within the organization is high (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2016). Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that such formal structures and statements often serve as myths generating legitimacy since they are symbolic rather than operational. All respondents of the interviews in this study suggest that first, security is a crucial part of the day-to-day activities since security actions such as briefings, in-depth risk analysis, weapon controls, visitations, status checks on employees before shooting and driving sessions, placements of lightsticks during exercises in darkness, etc. are being conducted. And second, that regulations are being followed with a few exceptions which will be highlighted later in this section.

Furthermore, Rasche and Gilbert (2015) describe that decoupling is something that can harm the organization since it may result in situations where the members of the organization stop taking relevant claims seriously since they have disbelief for the organization. Such decoupling does not exist on an organizational level in the context of safety and regulations in the Swedish Armed Forces according to the respondents. They do, on the other hand, suggest that decoupling sometimes is taking place on an individual level. SL1 describes that people can be careless and that it is impossible to control what each individual chooses to do even though S3 and PL1 argue that recruits at the beginning of their military career have officers supervising them at all times during shootings. All respondents are unanimous that breaking the security is a dangerous activity and that it can lead to serious injuries or even death which is why the security work is present in all day-to-day activities. Rasche and Gilbert (2015) suggest that decoupling may create a situation in which organizational members stop taking relevant claims seriously. Hence, one can argue that decoupling in the context of the Swedish Armed forces'

security work could result in members of the organizations not taking instructions seriously which according to respondents of this study could end up in someone being injured or killed.

Regarding the efficiency-coupling relationship in the context of safety and regulations, all respondents are unanimous that safety is a top priority and that if one would try to speed up the day-to-day activities (such as e.g. shooting and driving sessions), the safety would be suffering, resulting in a more dangerous working environment. As previously highlighted, S5 argues that due to the strict hierarchical environment, individuals maybe will not dare to raise their hand and ask if they do not understand. Such lack of understanding in a shooting session can according to him be fatal, why SL3 suggests that if the officers that are in charge of the exercises brief the squad leaders, and then the squad leaders do the controls/checks on their group, it would be more likely for the soldiers to speak up if they have any question or have forgotten something then if they were to speak up in front of the whole platoon.

5.3 Equality

Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that in order for an organization to gain or maintain external acceptance and furthermore gain legitimacy as suggested by Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), it has to follow the institutionalized regulations of the external environment. As S9 suggests that the Swedish Armed Forces works extensively with equality with the purpose of reflecting the society, one can argue that it is one way for the organization to incorporate the external environment as suggested by Meyer and Rowan (1977). Also, all respondents from the interviews are unanimous that the Swedish Armed Forces is working daily to improve the equality within the organization which supports the claim in the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct stating that an active and sustainable development process is taking place in the organization with the purpose of creating an equal organizational environment. The match between what is being articulated and what is actually taking place within the organization is displaying an adoption of the external environmental pressure as well as implemented in the day-to-day activities. Bromley et al., (2012) suggest such adoptions and implementations often being symbolic, something that the results in this study are questioning.

There are though personnel, such as SL4 who is arguing that she felt equal during her basic training as a recruit but as soon as she started to work as a professional military squad leader, it changed and she was back to being a woman again. Such a statement is displaying the inequality some personnel is experiencing in the profession. She is though strongly pointing out that work is being done within the field of equality and that she is taking part in it on a daily basis. In the context of Bromley et al.'s (2012) suggestion of adoptions and implementations, one can argue that SL4 believes that the organization is adopting and implementing the external pressure but that the work has not had sufficient impact just yet.

In the context of equality contributing to an efficient organization, the Swedish Armed Forces is clear by pointing out that the work on gender equality aims to make the organization more efficient: "The work on gender equality and equality simply aims to make the Swedish Armed Forces' operations better and more effective." (the Swedish Armed Forces, 2018). PL1 supports

this claim by stating that the most important contributor to organizational efficiency in the Swedish Armed Forces is to continue working with equality and diversity in the organization.

Even though the statement regarding efficiency in connection to the equality work is something that is backed up by PL1, this perception was not something that was unanimous by all of the respondents. For example, S3 and S5 conclude that the equality work had an effect on them, but when asked to exemplify how, it was vaguer. Another usual perception is that equality work does not affect the people in the organization because it is already equal, as expressed by for instance SL3. Since it is explicit that the organization is working constantly with equality, but at the same time it is rather unclear how it affects some of the people within the organization, one can argue that the work with equality is a symbolic implementation as expressed by Bromley et al., (2012), since it is unclear how the implementation of the equality work actually has created value for the organization and hence made the organization more efficient.

6. Conclusions

Regarding hypothesis A:

The Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Organizational structure due to the tightly coupled structure.

Based on the differing answers off the respondents regarding the externally communicated hierarchical structure, one cannot explicitly conclude that the structure is completely coupled, but rather a system that seems to be, as Orton and Weick (1990) describe it, a loosely coupled system. This is based on the fact that a majority of the respondents state that the hierarchical structure is followed at all times, while a few of the respondents experience a different reality of ignorance of the correct line of communications at times, and that the action of de- and recoupling as explained by Hallet (2010) were performed in specific situations. Although the system does not appear to be completely coupled, one can still argue that the partially tightly coupled structure has yielded the organization efficiency. This is based on the fact that all of the respondents, the previously mentioned exceptions included, were unanimous in the perception that the hierarchical structure gave the organization as a whole intelligibility and clarity to be able to cope with the day-to-day activities, and without the structure communicated to the organization they would not be able to perform their activities in the same efficient way as they are at the moment. Therefore, at the same time as a loosely coupled system occasionally is preferable, the organization stresses the importance of staying true to the organizational structure. With this in mind, one can neither explicitly reject nor accept hypothesis A.

Regarding hypothesis B:

The Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Safety & Regulations due to the tightly coupled structure.

Of all the three themes investigated in this study, the theme regarding safety and regulations is the one perceived most tightly coupled. All respondents are unanimous that safety is crucial while conducting exercises such as shooting sessions and also that regulations in connection to safety are followed. Hence, a match between the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct is apparent. Decoupling is not present (with a few exceptions on an individual basis), which can be argued to be because of the risk of members not taking relevant claims seriously as suggested by Rasche and Gilbert (2015), which according to the respondents potentially could result in injury or death.

Moreover, the result of this study implies that if the organization would try to speed up the day-to-day activities (such as e.g. shooting), the safety would be suffering, resulting in a more dangerous working environment. All of the respondents furthermore suggest that their perception is that work regarding safety and regulations is being conducted in the best way possible with only one suggestion of a minor change. Hence, the result of this study implies that there is a tight coupling between what is being articulated in the Swedish Armed Forces'

(2016) Code of Conduct and the internal work and furthermore that such tight coupling is generating legitimacy and makes the day-to-day activities organizational efficient in the context of safety and regulations. Thus, hypothesis B can be accepted.

Regarding the hypothesis C:

The Swedish Armed Forces is organizational efficient in the context of Equality due to the tight coupled structure.

The respondents of the interviews are unanimous that the Swedish Armed Forces is conducting equality work on a day-to-day basis. Hence, there is a match between the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct and what is being done internally. All of the respondents argue that the equality work is making the organization more equal in different ways, for instance, that the number of female employees in the organization is increasing. Some of the respondents imply that that the organization is unequal and the work is needed and furthermore that more work needs to be done in the field of equality.

The perceptions of some individuals in the organization suggest that equality and diversity are crucial parts for the organization to remain and become more organizational efficient. On the other hand, several others of the respondents argue that the effects of the equality work on efficiency are not notable since their perception is that the organization already is equal or that the efficiency has remained the same even though the equality work is being conducted. One can argue that the Swedish Armed Forces is tightly coupled in the context of what is being articulated in the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct and what is being internally implemented but since the actual effects on the organizational efficiency are vague, one can argue that such implementation is symbolic as suggested by Bromley et al., (2012). Hence, since the results regarding the relationship between the tightly coupled structure and organizational efficiency in the field of equality are too vague, hypothesis C can neither be accepted nor rejected.

The purpose of this study is to test if and, in that case, how a tightly coupled structure in a public, hierarchical organization generates legitimacy and organizational efficiency simultaneously. The results of this study imply that organizational efficiency is a consequence of a tightly coupled structure in some situations and that the deviation from such structure is what enables the organization to be efficient in others. Hence, no generalization can be made stating that tight coupling in the Swedish Armed Forces is what is yielding organizational efficiency. What on the other hand can be concluded, is that in certain business areas where the obedience of frameworks and regulations is crucial for the activities to remain safe and secure, the Swedish Armed Forces is able to efficiently carry through day-to-day activities thanks to the tight coupling between the Swedish Armed Forces' (2016) Code of Conduct and the internal activities. Also by doing so, one can argue that the organization in specific fields is trustworthy by being faithful to the framework the Swedish Armed Forces' Code of Conduct constitutes. Hence, an organization can, in specific fields obtain organizational efficiency and legitimacy simultaneously but adopting a tightly coupled approach. As the results of this research suggest,

a tightly coupled approach may not be suitable as a general approach in all fields, but rather in the context of certain business areas.

6.1 Managerial Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The result of this study aims to provide organizations with implications that a tightly coupled structure is preferable in certain business areas (e.g. safety and regulations), why organizations who are active in the field of such business areas, can benefit from using a tight coupling between what is articulated externally and what is being conducted internally, as a tool to gain organizational efficiency and legitimacy. Moreover, the implications of this study can serve informative by suggesting that large organizations such as the Swedish Armed Forces, can benefit from having a loosely coupled system with a tight coupling rather than a decoupled one when e.g. using communication lines in order to be organizational efficient. There are though some limitations with this study which could, for instance, have benefited from having examined a wider range of individuals of different sex with the purpose of getting multiple reflections of the organization within the field of equality. Hence, further research ought to focus on getting an equal representation of respondents with different sex. Further research also ought to examine personnel with higher positions in the internal hierarchy within the Swedish Armed Forces or organizations of similar kinds. It can moreover be of interest to test the coupling-efficiency relationship in other contexts than the three that have been focused during this research with the purpose of examining when a tightly coupled structure is preferable.

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