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Academic women with migrant background in the global knowledge economy: Bodies, hierarchies and resistance

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SYNOPSIS

Across the globe, academic work is changing in order to meet the demands of the global knowledge economy. This process of change is characterised by the dominant discourses of competition, accountability and excellence, which produce an imaginary of a seemingly disembodied researcher. Departing from a Swedish higher education and research policy landscape, the aim of this article is to explore how, in comparison with their Swedish colleagues, women academics with a migrant background make representations of the good researcher in their work practices. This involves exploring how processes of racialisation – including processes of whiteness – are at work when different layers of migration are read through a white Swedish normality. The results indicate that whiteness is an attributed quality and contributes to constructing success, and that racialised researchers stand out as being particularly invisible representations within a Research Excellence framework. In this article I suggest that this visibility/invisibility paradox (Mirza 2009) can be interpreted not only as a reflection of the number of racialised researchers in Swedish higher education, but also as a general discourse of colour-blindness and Swedish white privilege.

Introduction[1,2]

Across the globe, academic work is changing in order to meet the demands of the global knowledge economy (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007). At research policy level, the emergence of a global market has meant that universities now have to compete for funding and for the best researchers. In research practice, researchers are expected to increase the socioeconomic usefulness of their research; a development that is accompanied by discourses of hyper-competitiveness for funding, the best PhD students and academic positions (Gumport, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). This research has often focused on the STEM-subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine. It has also been criticised for assuming commonality between subject areas and for ignoring the fact that research institutions are gendered, classed and racialised and that this impacts work practices and identity formations (Currie, Thiele, & Harris, 2002; Leathwood & Read, 2009; Mirza, 2009; Morely, 2007). How these practices are embodied and the ways in which bodies are produced in higher education institutions is also an area that is under-researched (see also Ahmed, 2007).

Within the general research policy framework of hyper-competitiveness, commodification and research excellence, this article focuses on how differently situated researchers, with regard to race, gender, having a migration history/not having a migration history as well as different layers of migration, make representations of the good researcher in their work practices in two social science departments in an elite university in Sweden.

The aim is to analyse how, in Sweden, women academics with a migrant background make representations of bodies and attributes in relation to the social construction of the ideal good researcher as compared to their Swedish colleagues. This is done by analysing the privileges and/or oppressions that are produced through these representations, and how these representations differ between differently situated researchers. More specifically, this means analysing how visible the different

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inequalities are to the researchers and how differently positioned researchers negotiate these in their everyday academic work practices.

This information may increase our knowledge about how academic work practices in academic organisations are shaped by those who work in them and how this impacts *which* researchers are included when research projects, research collaborations and recruitment processes are constructed (see also Ahmed, 2007). Also in this context, the social divisions of migration in Swedish higher education will be explored in this article.

The central research questions are:

i) Which bodily appearances and social attributes are privileged over others in the representations of the good researcher, and do these representations differ between differently situated researchers?
ii) How is the relationship between the social attributes and bodily phenotypes that are associated with the good researcher represented?
iii) How is the awareness/legitimation of the different inequalities/privileges associated with the race, gender and migration history that is represented at the academic work practice level, and how does it differ between differently situated researchers?
iv) Are there different forms of resistance, and if so, how are these expressed and how do they differ between the differently situated researchers?

The article begins with a general background to the Swedish higher education and research policy landscape. This is followed by a description of the sample and the methodology. The results of the analysis are then outlined and the conclusions presented.

Background

The Swedish higher education landscape

The Swedish higher education (HE) system, with its close connections to a long tradition of social democratic state regulations, has undergone considerable changes over the previous decades both in terms of the expansion and direction of the sector. After almost seven decades of sustained social democratic governance, Sweden now has a right-wing coalition government. As such, the expansion and the move towards an increasing differentiation between Swedish HE institutions began during the social democratic era. In Sweden, the majority of research – and particularly basic research (as opposed to applied research) – takes place within the HE sector. The expansion of the sector in the mid-1990s was followed by an increase in the total revenue, the majority of which has come from external funding. But the expansion also generated a greater differentiation between HE institutions in terms of teaching and research tasks, which is also manifested in different types and levels of financial support. It is noteworthy that 80% of the state funding for research is allocated to six large HE institutions. There are currently 50 HE institutions and the sector employs 25% of all state employees (HSV 2010).

The number of international PhD students has grown by 14% in the last decade and now consists of 31% of the total PhD student population. In this group, 50% of the PhD students come from Asia, and here PhD students from China are over-represented. The majority of international PhD students are in the technical fields. Interestingly, the number of women is lower compared to the Swedish group, i.e. 39% and 51% respectively (Council for Higher Education Yearbook, 2010, 2011).

The number of Swedish PhD students with a migrant background is 16% of the total Swedish PhD student group. The Asian group is prominent, as are students originating from countries within the European Union. Iran stands out as the biggest single country. As far as disciplines are concerned, the technical and medical sciences are over-represented (ibid).

At staff level, the available statistics make no distinction between guest researchers and researchers with a migrant background. Here we find that the Asian group and researchers who are active in the technical and medical sciences dominate (Council for Higher Education Yearbook, 2010). As there are very few available statistics on *where* in the academic hierarchy researchers with a migrant background are located in Swedish HE, this is a research area that needs to be developed. In relation to this, it should be noted that more than 20% of the Swedish population have a migrant background and that 60% per cent of the migrant population has a European background. The main groups are from Finland, followed by Iraq and former Yugoslavia (SCB.2009:46).

While there is an almost complete discursive silence with regard to the experiences of staff with a migrant history and/or black or ethnic minorities in higher education, the situation is quite the reverse with regard to gender. This is indicated by national statistics on gender being mandatory and thereby easily accessible. In higher education, a number of research projects designed to challenge gender inequality in academia have been both initiated and directly funded by the state. From this it follows that large scale research projects that depart from an intersectional framework and include race are almost impossible to pursue, since no secondary data (national statistics) is available and, what is more, a special permit is required to collect data on race.[3] The discursive silence with regard to race appears to be particularly prominent in academia. In contrast, secondary data on race can be found in other areas, such as criminality, poverty and violence (see also Mählck 2012 for a discussion of Swedish research policy as an act of white performativity).

The policy frame

Following international trends, more recent policy imperatives in Sweden include a greater focus on the internationalisation of research collaboration and funding, the commercialisation of research results and resource allocation based on quality indicators such as external research funding, publications and citations (Government Bill 2008/09:50). The following text describes the newly implemented research allocation system and the assumed relationship between institutions (and individuals) and excellence.

> Quality-based funding allocations will give a strong signal to research institutions to work more actively with research quality and develop outstanding research. […] The quality should be measured from the universities' ability to attract external funding and the number of publications, combined with citation analysis. This method of quality-based allocation and reallocation should encourage universities

> to identify research profiles where they have a competitive advantage over others. A clearer division of roles between institutions and a greater specialisation can thus be achieved *(Author's translation National Research Bill 2008:09:50:23)*.

The recent implementation of strategic research areas and the additional funding tied to these areas are prominent in the current Research Bill. The following text from the current national research policy describes the criteria for defining a strategic area:

> *Criteria for investments are that the research in each area is of the highest international quality and that there is potential to achieve cutting edge status. It is also important to include an area where industry is in need of skilled personnel or the supply of qualified research (Author's translation, National Research Bill 2008: 09:50 p.25)*.

Apart from the obvious ways in which strategic areas are linked to global capitalism, this quotation also reveals the ways in which the humanities and the social sciences are disfavoured. Taken together, the above two quotations can be read as an illustration of the dominant discourse of commodification of research within a hyper-competitive research excellence framework. This is the general policy context for this article. Exploring the linkages between these discourses at policy level and the production of inequalities in academic practices is a further task. Here my ambition is much more limited, in that the social construction of the good researcher as it is produced at the academic department level forms the basis for an analysis of the visibility and invisibility of the privileges and oppression produced by migratory experiences and racialised and gendered inequality regimes and the ways in which bodily appearances are involved in these processes. In this context, reading these processes against a white Swedish normality is also at the core of this article.

In this context, it should be mentioned that in international terms, Sweden is often constructed as the promised land of gender equality. In what is regarded as a post-racial utopia, gender equality is seen as accomplished and colour-blindness as the norm (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009:335). These discourses have only recently begun to be challenged, and recent critical research on migration has made important contributions to this (see also Kamali, 2005; de los Reyes, Molina, & Mulinari, 2003). In addition, very few studies have focused specifically on the relevance of inhabiting a non-white body in a Swedish colour-blind context. Up to now, these studies have generally been found in studies of adoption and Sociology of youth (Andersson, 2008; Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009; Lundström, 2010a, 2010b). As such, the theoretical argument of this article is intended as a contribution to the area of HE and research policy that has paid less attention to experiences of migration and how these are gendered and racialised.[4] Up to now, none of these studies have included the ways in which bodily appearances are part of these processes.

The sample

I have interviewed 22 researchers from two academic departments in the fields of National Economic and Sociology at an elite University in Sweden. The academic ranks are Professors, associate professors, post-doc and PhD students. I have also interviewed heads of departments. The ages range between 30 and 65 and the majority are white Swedish. I have interviewed 12 men and 10 women. Notwithstanding, sexuality, class background and civil status are important social relations in an academic career. However, for anonymity reasons and the scope of this article which focus on race, gender and migration experience I have chosen not to analyse other parameters further.

Five researchers out of 22 have migration background and three of these are women. The three female informants with a migrant background are: a) a senior White academic with a migration background from a European country. She migrated to Sweden during the 1970s, works as a senior researcher at the Department of Sociology and is involved in a critical strand of research; b) a junior White researcher with a migration background from a close European country. She works at the Department of Sociology and migrated to Sweden in the early part of the 21st century. She is involved in a critical strand of research but distances herself from political activism; c) a junior researcher with an Asian background who works at the Department of National Economics and who migrated to Sweden in the early part of the 21st century. She is currently working in the research mainstream of the department.

Method

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed and all the transcripts sent to the researchers for their consent. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on themes related to recent policy changes in Swedish HE, what constituted the dominant discourses of good research, the concept of the good researcher and the good research collaborations at department level. The interviews also dealt with themes related to personal experiences of working in academia.

I have chosen to analyse the entire sample in order to illuminate the migrant women's experiences through the majority group (with no migration experience). The three interviews with the academic women with a migrant background have been analysed from a strategic point of view, rather than a representative one.

Since in Swedish academia the field of the social sciences is characterised by the low presence of academics with a migrant background and/or black and ethnic minority staff, the majority group in this article consists of white Swedish academics without any migration experience. Therefore, analysing how processes of whiteness are put into practice and how other social relations such as racialisation, migratory experience and gender are structured is also a core feature of this article.

Visualisation in interviews

During the interviews[5] I used visualisation as method for capturing social representations that are not usually formalised/verbalised as social knowledge (see also Banks, 1995). Here, the visibility exercise involved asking the informant to verbally describe the social attributes and bodily features of an imaginary ideal researcher. It is well known that,

in research processes, visualisations are produced by both the respondents and the researcher; the respondent chooses which visualisation to talk about and the researcher's interpretation of the verbal account is constitutive. From this it follows that there is not *one* or *true* visualisation, but that these are constantly produced and reproduced. Importantly, visualisations are not simply the mental products of an individual, but are representations and parts of larger discursive formations that are institutional and have material effects (Hall 1997, Pink, 2007). Thus, in addition to analysing the content of the visualisations, I have also been interested in the context in which they are produced and in particular to analyse *which* imaginaries are produced by *which* researchers.

It is important to recognise that interviews are a particular kind of fieldwork that "*serve as an interactional context through which the qualitative researcher's racial identity and the racial identities of those under study are actively managed, negotiated and solicited*" (Best, 2003:895). Although an analysis of these processes is not the main focus of this article, it is nevertheless important to be sensitive to the ways in which speech acts in an interview context contribute to the construction/opposition of a racialised social order and how this impacts on how certain racial categories (researchers and research participants) talk about their experiences.

For me, as a "second generation immigrant" of mixed race background, negotiating shifting processes of racialisation is an embodied experience and part of my very being and acting in academia. In this sense, I have experiences from academia that include both processes and moments of passing as white and the privileges that follow e.g. being included and excluded from black communities as someone who could pass as white or black and being constructed into the exotic and racialised Other by white Swedes (see also Ali, 2005, for a discussion of mixedness and available subject positions in the UK). Until now I have not analysed whether or how these negotiations manifest themselves in my research practice. However, engaging in the visualisation exercise has made me reflect on the ways in which these mutual negotiations contributed to the shifting responses I received from differently situated researchers. For example, I used my ambivalent position to stop the production of white privilege when I interviewed white academics who assumed that I would speak from a white subject position and required my participation, as white, for the production of whiteness in the interview situation. Similarly, I also noticed that when I interviewed staff with a migrant background, I often told them about my own background in order to level out the hierarchical situation that an interview situation produces. I will touch on this in the part of the article dealing with the visualisations.

Inequality regimes in academic work practices

From a feminist perspective, academic work practices have been widely theorised and include a variety of theoretical and methodological designs, e.g. anthropology, organisation studies, social–psychological approaches, Foucauldian micro-political approaches and socio-bibliometric interactions (Husu, 2001; Mählck 2008; Morley, 1999; Traweek, 1988). This article takes its general point of departure from the framework of Acker's (2006) intersectional analysis of work organisation and practice and her concept of *inequality regimes*, which is particularly designed to analyse *the bases of inequalities*, the *shape and degree of inequalities* and to *identify barriers to creating equality in organisations*. In this article, inequality regimes work as an analytical entrance for analysing representations of the good researcher and the inequalities/privileges attached to this. As such, this study gives the same analytical weight to informal interactions and imaginaries as to official processes, such as employing people, wage setting and so on. The analytical tools used are the *visibility of bases of inequalities* and the *legitimacy of inequality regimes*, because they capture important information about the privileges and oppressions that are visible to the researchers. In this article I also analyse how bodily appearances are involved in those processes.

Within this framework, a central focus is to analyse how race, gender and migration histories are mutually constituted and mutually constitute different structures of inequality.[6] Here, gender, race and migration history are approached as *relational social constructs that influence access to power and positions in society at large* and, for the purpose of this article, *in workplaces in particular* (see Krekula, Närvänen, & Näsman, 2005 for a similar approach in relation to age). In addition to this, gender, race and migration history differ significantly in that they have different ontological origins. In contrast to gender and race, migration histories are explicitly produced through spacio-temporal processes, although they can also be gendered and racialised (Bilge & Denis, 2010; Lundström, 2010a, 2010b). Therefore, analysing different layers of migration and how and when power relations associated with gender and race intersect, reinforce and oppose each other in the representations of the good researcher is also central to this article.

Analysis

As already mentioned, the voices of the three women with different migration backgrounds have been analysed in relation to the material as a whole. The analysis is structured in five parts, which to a varying degree put these three voices at the forefront. However, taken together, these five parts include new information about how different layers of migration are constructed in relation to a white Swedish normality within the overall framework of the good researcher.

Producing white privilege through colour-blindness

The general description of the dominant discourse of the Good Researcher was surprisingly uniform across departments, subject areas, academic positions, gender, age, race and migration history. The main characteristics of the social attributes that emerged were: a) being able to attract large research grants, b) publish interesting results in high impact journals and, c) being able to communicate and collaborate with actors inside and outside academia. Some of the researchers disagreed with these characteristics, while others added a few more, such as being a good teacher and challenging old knowledge. What kind of bodily appearances are connected to these social attributes? This question was

raised by one of the informants when she spontaneously offered to visualise her representation:

> I'm convinced that the definition in one way or another is gendered or ethnicised. If one could visualise it, literally and describe its bodily phenotypes, then I'm sure that gender and ethnicity would pop up. Because one doesn't in the first place picture a woman, it is possible to picture a woman but then it is a particular kind of woman.

This particular researcher was a white female academic with a migrant background, who had migrated to Sweden from a European country during the 1970s and now worked as a senior academic in the Department of Sociology and had a critical research orientation. In this quotation it is obvious that the concept of woman needs to be further deconstructed "it is a particular kind of woman". The respondent mentions ethnicity/race, suggesting that not all women can embody the Good Researcher and that white women are privileged in this process. Her visualisation exercise made me ask the other informants to visualise the Good Researcher after describing its general characteristics from a departmental point of view and from their own personal standpoint.

What kind of bodily features could be ascribed to the social construction of the Good Researcher? Which privileges and/or inequalities would then be highlighted/not highlighted? Would the representations differ between differently positioned researchers? Following Acker's (2006) theoretical work, the visibility of inequalities/privileges can be used to analyse ways in which inequality regimes are managed in practice. This may result in processes of opposing as well as legitimising inequalities and maintaining the status quo. In accordance with Acker, visibility in this article is defined as "*[…]the degree of awareness of inequalities […] in organizations*" (Acker, 2006:452). From this it follows that a lack of awareness may be either intentional or unintentional, and that visibility varies with the position of the beholder. Feminists have argued that one privilege of the privileged is not to see their privilege. For example, men tend not to see their gender privilege, whites tend not to see their race privilege and members of the ruling class tend not to see their class privilege (Acker, 2006; McIntosh, 1990). The results were overwhelmingly uniform, as is illustrated in the following quotation from a white female working as a junior researcher in the Department of Sociology. Here she answers the research question relating to whether she can visualise the Good Researcher:

> If you are successful you are about 40, an associate professor and have thousands of ongoing research projects, big networks and travel around to conferences and so on. You may say that probably you are not overweight, yea, well dressed (laughs) but I can't say that it is only men who are the norm, not anymore. I can't really say that. There are many role models now. They are tough, successful, self-confident, women actually.

In this quotation, the young, female, white, Swedish informant describes the dominant representation of the Good Researcher as someone who is young, ambitious, not necessarily a man, although until recently this has been the norm, well-dressed and slim. The description reveals how *gender*, *age* and *bodily features veer towards middle-class belonging* to construct the Good Researcher. As such, there is a general awareness of privileges being attached to men who are middle-class and able-bodied. Continuing the interview, I asked:

> I: What "colour" is she? What does she look like?
> R: Well, of course I think of white people. But then, I'm situated in a department and a country that are white. In the department, do we have someone? Well, it would be X researcher, who is from…
> I: But why do you think that you only mentioned this after I posed the question, why do you think this happened?
> R: Because most researchers who work both here and internationally are, well white. It's as simple as that. There are no black researchers either. I mean, the "bad" researcher is not black; the picture of the researcher – good or bad – is white in my unreflective view of the world.

Despite the academic emphasis on the social construction of race and, in Sweden, the dominant discourse of a post-racial utopia, the ideas of race as an essentialist category is still used to produce racist accounts. In this process, Suki Ali notes "*[…]- the skin has been one of the most tenacious markers of race throughout western history. Skin is the visible reflection of raced ideologies […]*" (2004: 76). Against this backdrop, I will argue that exploring the embodied dimensions of processes of racialisation, in other words the meanings attached to differently coloured bodies, is of crucial importance for understanding how inequality regimes are constructed in Swedish academia. The following will expand on this.

Although the direct question about colour seems to force the respondent to visualise a white researcher, I suggest that the process of whiteness reveals itself in the *first* quotation, namely, through the process and assumption of a shared position of whiteness between the interviewer and the interviewed. In the process of *naming* colour in my question "what colour is she?" the shared position of whiteness collapses. In addition, whiteness is produced through the process of negation/erasure: "*There are no black researchers*". Although it is unclear if the respondent refers to the political concept of black or concrete bodies, this also erases all other categories of mixedness or other ethnic minorities (see also Ali, 2004 and Mirza 2009 for a discussion of blackness in UK). This erasure/silence was reflected in the lack of statistics on race and particularly in relation to data on mixedness in Sweden. Since 2003 the Swedish national census has no longer collected data on mixedness. The dominant argument is that visualising this category constructs difference, i.e. in order to be equal, difference should not be highlighted. Although no national statistics are available at staff level, it is a well known fact that there are very few researchers with a migrant background and/or black staff in the social sciences in Swedish academia. This does not mean that they do not exist, however. International and Swedish qualitative research on staff with migrant backgrounds and/or black and ethnic minority researchers indicates this (Mirza, 2009; Leathwood, Maylor, & Moreau, 2009; Saxonberg and Sawyer, 2006).

In the above interview quotations, this visibility/invisibility paradox (Mirza, 2009) is not only displayed through *what* is

actually said, but also through *how* the interview situation evolves. To elaborate on this, the respondent obviously refers to me as white, which not only does not acknowledge how race is represented by my body, but also negates the experiences of managing a coloured body in a colour-blind academia. In addition to this, she requires my participation as white in order to interpret her story as an anti-racist account (see Ahmed, 2004 on the complexities involved in anti-racism). I will expand on this in the following.

This situation also reveals the complex position of this young white woman in the context of a colour-blind Sweden. For example, she is very critical of the race inequality that exists both at the university and in her department. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) expresses this succinctly by saying that: *White women have to repress, avoid and conceal a great deal in order to maintain a stance of "not noticing" color. From this point of view, there are apparently only two options open to white women: either one does not have to say anything about race, or one is apt to be deemed "racist" simply by virtue of having something to say* (p. 33).

Reconsidering the quotations again, we notice that race is not mentioned in the first quotation but is underlined in the second. If whiteness is such a dominating feature, more so than gender, why wasn't it brought up at the same time as gender? Also, why were age and being middle-class and able-bodied brought up in the description in the first quotation, while race was not?

The difference between describing bodily phenotypes relating to age, class affinity and being able-bodied and those of race is that the latter have been/are still used to construct processes of racialisation. From this it follows that the reason for not highlighting race in the first quotation seems to be a reluctance to talk about the subject, which is represented by a discourse of colour-blindness. Many feminists have pointed out that a colour-blind strategy does not challenge racism and, more importantly, that colour-blindness is constructed within a discursive framework of essentialist racism (Frankenberg, 1993; Mirza, 2009). I therefore suggest that what constructs the invisibility/erasure of race//mixedness, in contrast to for example gender as a base for inequality, is not only the numerical nature of the black and ethnic minority in the social sciences in Swedish academia, but also a strong discursive presence of colour-blindness and white privilege. Although the main focus of this part of the article is to explore how the relationship between social attributes and bodily features is represented, it seems clear that the role and function of essentialist racism in the discourse of colour-blindness and White privilege is an area that warrants further attention in future research.

Preferred representations and the position of researcher

Although the invisibility of race inequality/race privilege dominated in the interviews with all the researchers, two interesting exceptions could be found: the senior white female with a migrant background who suggested the visualisation to me, and a white male researcher working at the Department of National Economics. This male researcher explicitly referred to his international research orientation and research collaboration with African colleagues, as well as his personal experiences of migration from a European country to Sweden, as the reasons why he did not visualise the good researcher as white. These two researchers,[7] were the only ones who did not automatically visualise a white researcher.

From this we cannot say that a migration experience automatically alters people's awareness of inequality regimes based on race, or that experience of migration is the only factor. However, it does seem that migration experience in combination with other factors, such as a having a research orientation that is outside the dominant western canon, affects the likelihood of a person being aware of inequality regimes based on race.

How, then, are these representations of visibility/invisibility of the bases of inequality mediated in practice? This will be explored in more detail in the following section.

The visibility and legitimation of inequalities

In the following quotation, a white, female, Swedish junior researcher from the Department of National Economics reflects on the importance of being strategic, i.e. which journals to publish in, which research projects to engage in etc., in order to further her career and become a good researcher. As part of this she highlights a mentoring programme at university level that is particularly designed for junior academic women. She is very much in favour of this type of intervention and sees academia as being a gendered institution. In the quotation, below, she responds to the question of whether she thinks that other groups might benefit from such programmes, and if so, which?

> I reckon that the needs one has are basically pretty similar to all recently graduated PhDs. Then, possibly, men do perhaps find it a little easier to be recruited into research groups. But I definitely believe that as a recently graduated PhD you need support to get on.

From the above description, we know that the interviewed researcher sees gender and having a junior academic position as bases of inequalities that need more resources. In the quotation, she adds that being structurally located in a junior academic position may also affect men negatively and that as such this group may also need extra resources. Continuing the interview I asked about race:

> I: But I'm thinking of race for example.
> R: Yes, I had not even thought about race. It's a great point. If I had come from another (country). You may notice that most of the new graduate students from other countries need a bit more help, yes, with simple things — so that is correct.

As we can see, race is not considered until it is directly addressed. As such, this quotation can be read as what Healy, Bradley, and Forson (2011:478) call "*The interrelation between workplace interactions and awareness*", which in this case is represented by a general lack of awareness of race as an inequality regime. The first quotation also refers to a complete discursive silence with regard to how academic position, gender, race and migration experience intersect and operate in an early academic career. It is important to note that here race is considered as a possible base for inequality with regard to *new PhD students from other countries* and, in this sense, constructs the Swedish population as a white

unitary population. Returning to the quotation again, we can see that new students from other countries could benefit from being informed about *simple things*, rather than career strategies or strategies against discrimination in academia, as in the case of academic women. One possible interpretation of this is that important career processes such as publishing, fund raising and research collaboration are seen as gendered but not racialised. Such a view also affects migration trajectories and the experiences of academics with a migrant background in Swedish higher education (See also Mellström, 2012). This quotation can be read as ways in which gender is legitimised as being a base for inequality and how this benefits from affirmative action programmes where an intersectional reading of gender, race, academic position and migration experience is not given similar legitimacy and resources. This does not mean that these inequality regimes do not exist, however. In the following, an analysis of how migration histories and gendered and racialised inequality regimes intersect and how bodily appearances are represented in these processes.

Language, migration trajectories and spacio-temporal processes: new frontiers or the same?

> I think language is one of the biggest obstacles for me [..] if I want to have a career here. [..] I think it is an informal rule that if you want a position in the department, you need to speak Swedish. Every associate professor or professor is expected to teach in Swedish because most of the courses are in Swedish and so, actually, I think this is a controversial issue because Swedish universities are trying to be a more internationalised but on the other hand it is not an English speaking country.

In this quotation, a young female researcher with a migration history from Asia talks about what she perceives as being the main obstacle for her research career, namely the demand for Swedish language skills. In relation to this, she also highlights that this situation opposes the imperatives of internationalisation at research policy level, and as such constructs a paradoxical situation.

This quotation should also be contrasted with those from the two white women with a migrant background. One of the two women had migrated from a close European country during the early part of the 21st century and speaks fluent Swedish. She has noticed that some Swedish researchers make jokes about her accent, but as she believes that her accent has positive connotations for most Swedes, she has not perceived it as being a problem. The senior academic white woman did not perceive language as a big barrier either; neither in the past when she first arrived in Sweden with practically no Swedish at all, nor at present. In the following quotation, the senior white female researcher with migration experience comments on what she perceives as the changing meaning of language skills:

> I feel that things are different now. Had I come here *now* and started to learn Swedish, I would probably have entered (academia) in a different way. The language issue was put on the agenda through the right-wing party's interventions. So now people have become aware that certain people cannot speak the language. And I had not thought of that before […] It's strange the way things have gone crazy with the language issue.

In the quotation, she refers to the right-wing party campaign to increase the importance of immigrants passing language tests before entering the Swedish labour market. Taken together, these quotes reveal how the meaning of language has changed — from being an inequality operating at individual level and as such invisible at institutional level, to being a marker of difference and thereby a highly visible constraint at the institutional and structural level.

What is also explored in these quotations is how different spacio-temporal processes and migration trajectories mutually constitute different positions and access to power and resources from which the respondents have to negotiate the increasing demand for Swedish language skills.

A majority of researchers, with and without migration experiences pointed at the requirements of speaking Swedish as paradoxical in times of global competition and internationalisation and also that this requirement could be hampering the careers of researchers from non-Swedish backgrounds. How does the visibility of language, relate to the social construction of the Good Researcher? One of the interviewed White Swedish researchers particularly pointed to women researchers with an Asian background as having most difficulties in being accepted as Good Researchers. Interestingly, this remark was not based on their language skills or research skills, but on what they *looked* like.

> […] It would have been more difficult, particularly if I had been a short, slender woman from Asia. I imagine they have the most difficulty in getting authority and being taken seriously […] you are not supposed to have much about you, except being nice and possibly good in a (laugh) discreet way.

This quotation reveals one of the most persistent, stereotypical imaginaries of Asian women of our times, namely that of a passive victimised woman with petite (from a stereotypical western norm point of view) bodily features. Needless to say, this imaginary has been thoroughly scrutinised and contested by a number of postcolonial feminists. Among other things, it indicates the role that this imaginary plays in constructing white researchers and/or researchers from the global north as rescuers and heroines (Puwar, 2003).

In this article, the above quotations explore how different forms of inequality coincide: researchers with migrant backgrounds who have bodily features that negate the social construction of white researchers are also more vulnerable to the increasing demand for Swedish language skills — a demand that is gaining in importance in recruitment processes. This raises the question as to whether increasing demands for language skills represent new barriers, as suggested by one of the interviewed women, or whether it represents old patterns of racialised and gendered barriers for researchers with a migrant background.

Situated resistance

The previous quotations have focused on an intersectional reading of the visibility and invisibility of the bases of inequality

as they are displayed in the representations of the good researcher. The remainder of this article will focus on whether and how women with a migration history oppose these regimes and if they do, how this differs in relation to the majority group, i.e. their white Swedish colleagues.

With regard to the general construction of the good researcher as someone who attracts large research grants, publishes in high impact journals and communicates well with the academic community, only one of the three women respondents was critical of this ideal. She referred to this as a new form of "*instrumentalism*" that points academia towards including researchers who conform to the system and excluding those who are unwilling or unable to do so. Here she highlights that the available subject positions are not the same for all researchers:

> A woman who does what men do is fine. But there is a limit: you cannot be "an immigrant" in order to fit in or be a gay man either (laughs).

As such, she not only highlights the dominant representations of the good researcher, but also that the creation of alternative subject positions within a highly racialised, gendered, hetero-normative and competitive higher education context is unevenly distributed.

She sees this new form of "instrumentalism" as harmful to equality in academia, because it means that fewer researchers will be engaged in critical/emancipatory research questions and research practices, i.e. limiting the possibility for collective actions against structures of oppression. She refers to her identity as a researcher in a critical strand of sociology for developing this position. As this critical position could be found among researchers across gender, race, migration experience and academic disciplinary borders, she has more in common with researchers who were in some way situated outside the western canon of mainstream social science, than with the other women with migration experiences — thereby highlighting the usefulness of contributions from a feminist situated knowledge perspective (Haraway, 1988) for theorising emancipation and resistance.

As for the opposing dominant discourses of sexism and racism, all women respondents have developed strategies to negotiate these. Reaching out for support from colleagues in the same position was the most common strategy. However, depending on the degree of oppression the women had experienced and the spacio-temporal moment at which the women had entered Swedish academia, this process had either been easier or more difficult to achieve. Here, having a migration background added an additional layer to this. As pointed out by the white female senior academic with migrant background:

> This is what makes me now enjoy work so much: because I work with Researcher X, whose origins are outside Europe, I can collaborate with someone who is at the same level (academically), we can talk nonsense [laughs]. No, seriously, I can work in a different way, instead of always being the one who has to initiate things. […] So there is also this thing about being the first one too, it's a kind of discrimination.

From these quotations it is clear that the women had developed similar strategies in order to resist sexism and racism (i.e. reaching out for support). The difference lay in the resources they could access from their positions and the degree to which they had mediated these strategies in their research practice in order to develop resistance from within the system. In this context, their resistance was mediated through how and where they published, which research questions they were engaged in, and with whom they collaborated.

Conclusions

Departing from Acker (2006) well-known concepts of *the base of inequality* and *the visibility of inequality*, this article explores how different layers of migration histories are read through a dominant white Swedish normality. The theoretical contribution of this article is to demonstrate how *the base of inequality* and *the visibility of inequalities*, as they are represented in Swedish academia, are constructed and maintained through dominant discourses of colour-blindness and Swedish white privilege. This highlights both the benefits of relating Acker's concepts to critical race theory and the necessity of being sensitive to the different geopolitical contexts in which this is operationalised. The results also underline the importance of exploring how migration trajectories and migration experiences both structure and are structured by the complexities of racialisation. In a Swedish HE and research policy setting, this implies being particularly sensitive to different layers of whiteness. Core aspects of the analysis are the processes of oppression and the privileges that follow.

The results in this article indicate that having a migration vs not having a migration experience was not the only parameter that influenced how visible different inequality regimes were to the researchers. Instead it was the combination of having an experience of migration and/or a research orientation lying outside the western canon that altered the possibility of seeing processes of racialisation. This further underlines the need for future research that explore the complexities of racialisation – including whiteness – and different layers of migration for the production of privilege and oppression in academia.

As already mentioned, the field of HE and research policy is often constructed through dominant discourses of competition, accountability and excellence. These are often displayed as a *war over the best brains*, thereby presenting a representation of a disembodied researcher. This article demonstrates the usefulness of including how bodies are represented in analyses of research policy and HE since these representations, in a longer perspective, may contribute to the structuring of future research landscapes. Feminist research has made important contributions by analysing the ways in which representations of gendered bodies are part of the production and reproduction of an androcentric and a heteronormative organisation of research and epistemology (Keller, 1985; Widerberg, 1995). By exploring how the relationship between bodily appearances and social attributes are represented in the representations of the good researcher, this article suggests that the role of biological racism (much less researched than cultural racism) in recruitment and employment practices in academia needs to be researched further. From this, it follows that another theoretical contribution of this article is to highlight the importance of including *representations of bodies in the*

framework of the base of inequalities and the *visibility of bases of inequalities*. Exploring the lived experiences of corporeality and the social divisions that are inherent in these processes is also something that needs further attention.

Although resistance is difficult to construct, it became clear that women (with and without a migration background) resisted sexism and racism by reaching out to their colleagues in the same situation. The difference lies on how much power and how many resources were available to them in their positions, as well as to the extent to which they included their critical views in their research practices.

For the future this article recommend that it is important to: a) challenge the perception of Sweden as a post-racial society, b) raise the awareness of intersectional sensitive equality work at universities and, c) mobilise resistance across the bases of inequalities and work towards the reshaping of the research excellence framework in academia from a place that produces knowledge for economic growth to a place where knowledge is produced for social justice.

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Endnotes

[1] This research was made possible with the financial support from the Swedish Research Council, VR/UVK and GEXcel program at Örebro University.

[2] I Note on language: In this article I use the concepts of race and racialisation. These concepts are understood and operationalised within a social constructivist framework and are inspired by postcolonial feminist studies and critical race and whiteness studies (see Essed & Goldberg, 2001; Miles, 1989). This means that concepts like whiteness and race are seen as socially constructed and continuously produced. These concepts are always relational and embedded within historicised power relations and structures and are therefore always negotiable and never final. As the main focus of the article is to analyse representations of bodily appearances, racialisation is the central concept here, rather than ethnic identity, namely the processes whereby different bodily appearances are linked to certain stereotypes and images (see for example Hübinette and Tigervall, 2009 for a similar approach).

[3] The labelling in the national Swedish census is country of birth and born in Sweden with two parents born abroad (Statistisk årsbok 2008).

[4] There are a few important studies in the Swedish context, see for example Saxonberg and Sawyer (2006), de Los Reyes (2009).

[5] In the interviews I had to use the concept of ethnicity, because this is the dominant discourse in Swedish society. During the analytical work and in discussing the results I changed this to race.

[6] As feminist intersectional research has demonstrated, there are many more power relations that are likely to be important for the representation of the ideal researcher (see for example Leathwood & Read, 2009 for a discussion of gender, race and class in UK academia). Some social relations are highly visible, such as age and some disabilities, while others are not quite so visible, such as sexuality, class relations and certain disabilities. However, in this article I have chosen to focus on gender, race and migration experience since these are the parameters that are most visible *and* silent in the data.

[7] Since the visualisation exercise evolved during the interview process not all interviewed researchers were asked to do this (some had been interviewed prior to this). Among the researchers that were asked this question (8) only two did not visualise a white researcher. It is worth noting that other social attributes that was brought up could vary such as the ideal age, gender and class background. The only parameter that did not vary was race. It is likely to believed that this result would have been further strengthen if all informants have been asked this question but future research on the role and functioning of racialisation in academia is needed.

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