



# **DON'T TOUCH MY HAIR**

**A Qualitative Study on Professional Norms and Meanings of  
Black Female Hair in Swedish Public Administration**

Author: Salem Yohannes

Supervisor: Ann Towns

Examiner:

**Bachelor's Thesis in Political Science 15 ECTS  
Department of Economics and Informatics  
University West  
Spring Term 2014**

## **Abstract**

This single case study conducted with creative interviews, addresses perceptions of professional norms and meanings of black female hairstyles in Swedish public administration. By incorporating prior U.S scholarship and applying intersectional theory, black female hair is analyzed through social constructions of gender, race and class as intermeshed dimensions. This study indicates how the norms of neutrality, disadvantage black female employees in Swedish public administration, as they are subjected to stares, comments and touching of their “deviant” hairstyles. The intersectional analysis indicates how perceptions of femininity and blackness collide in problematic ways, as black professional hair is described as straight hair. Despite this, the informants were convinced that straight hair does not come naturally for black women. Concluding, this study suggests that black women may be more seriously taken, by presenting a “feminine” and “neutral” hairstyle, through subjecting themselves to perceived straight hair norms in Swedish public administration.

**Key words:** professional, norms, black, hair, Sweden

# Table of Contents

1. The Politization of White Norms in Sweden .....	1
2. Existing Scholarship on the Politics of Black Hair and Swedish Scholarship on Racialization and Afro Swedes .....	3
2.1 The International Academia on the Politics of Black Hair .....	3
2.2 The Swedish Research on Racialization and Afro Swedes .....	5
2.3 The Need for more Swedish Black Gender Studies .....	6
3. Intersectional Theory: Gender, Race, Class and Meanings of Black Female Hair .....	7
3.1 Social Constructions of Gender/Femininity and Race/Blackness .....	8
3.2 The Intersectional Character of Gender, Race and Class .....	10
3.3 Professional Norms and U.S Black Female Hair/Styles .....	13
3.4 Analytical Framework – Meanings of U.S Professional and Unprofessional Female Black Hair/Styles .....	17
4. Specified Aim and Research Questions .....	18
5. A Qualitative Single Case Study .....	19
5.1 The Single Case - Sweden .....	20
5.2 Interviews as Data Collecting Method and Data .....	21
5.3 Selection of Sample and Interviewees .....	22
5.4 An Intersectional Analysis of the Data .....	24
6. Professional Norms in relation to Black Female Hair/Styles .....	26
6.1 The Straight Hair Norm and Black Hair/Styles as Norm Breakers .....	28
6.2 Intersectional Analysis of Professional and Unprofessional Black Female Hair/Styles .....	32
6.3 Comparison: US and Swedish meanings of Black Female Hair/Styles .....	42
6.4 Analytical Framework – Meanings of Swedish Professional and Unprofessional Black Female Hair/Styles .....	44
7. Conclusion: Understandings of Black Female Hair in Swedish Public Administration .....	45
7.1 Contribution to the International and Swedish Academia .....	46
7.2 Come on, Girl. It’s just Hair? .....	47
8. Bibliography .....	49
9. Appendix 1 – Interview Guide .....	56
Appendix 2 – Observational Data .....	57

# 1. The Politization of White Norms in Sweden

The Swedish debate on white normality has intensified during the year of 2014. Issues of racism and prejudice, white normality and raced beauty have surfaced and been questioned by multiple voices within Swedish society. In February 2014, a research report was presented to the Swedish government focusing on Afrophobia and hate related crimes (Hübinette et al 2014). The following month, “Svenska Dagbladet” initiated an article series inviting colored Swedes to describe and discuss their experiences of living in a white Swedish society (Svenska Dagbladet 2014). Further on, a documentary called the “Race card” was broadcasted in March, where a group of black Swedes shared their personal stories of experienced racism (SVT 2014).

The ongoing debate has spread to all levels of Swedish society, where colored Swedes and antiracist feminists have taken initiatives through social media. The aim is to deconstruct and oppose Swedish “white supremacy” and fight structural racism. “Rummet” is an antiracist feminist website by and for racialized Swedes, which have received attention in Swedish media. “Rummet” have become a heated subject due to its separatist character, where “white” involvement is excluded (Aftonbladet 2014). Another example is the Instagram page called “SvartKvinna” which posts images of racist and sexist “every day” insults, directed towards Swedish black women (InstagramA 2014, Metro 2014).

During the Swedish news program *Aktuellt* this year, the journalists talked about a black feminist hair movement in Ivory Coast (SVT Aktuellt 2014). The two Swedish journalists described how the black feminist group “Nappy’s de Babi” along with other black women globally were teaming up to encourage and empower black women to resist western beauty ideals, the long straight hair (SVT Aktuellt 2014). At the same time, the US Army set new hair grooming codes, which received criticism from all over the U.S (New York Times 2014). The public institution (US Army) was accused of discriminating black women within the army, by restricting their alternatives of hairstyles. Hairstyles that are perceived as “black”, such as afro’s, dreadlocks and braids, are regarded as unprofessional, and are either banned or strictly regulated (New York Times 2014). The controversial hair grooming codes in the US Army have become a high political question, as the secretary of Defense addressed the discriminating hair requirements and demanded the US military to review the new regulations (New Hampshire Public Radio 2014).

This indicates how black hair has become political due to racial bias, even though the US military is a public institution and a part of the US state. Within other non-military public institutions in countries, there are norms of neutrality regulating the roles and work of civil servants. The norms of neutrality are intended to help insure a civil servant's impartiality, objectivity and predictability at work (Maranto & Skelley 1992, Fox 1992, Selden et al 1999). But, the question is, if the norms of neutrality also relate to professional appearance? The newly established hair grooming codes in the US Army illustrates how norms of neutrality may affect people of color, especially black women in a negative way. When a public institution such as the US Army, publicly designates e.g. dreadlocks as an "unkempt" hairstyle, it reflects how "black" hairstyles are marked as unprofessional due to raced norms within societal institutions.

White norms in public administration have not yet become a topic of public debate in Sweden, in contrast to the US. Despite this, an interesting question is to see if these norms can be detected within Swedish public administration. This study will thus, investigate how Swedish norms of professional hair/styles perceived by black female public servants. The aim is to describe perceived professional norms and analyze meanings of black female hair/styles in Swedish public administration. An attempt to analyze Swedish public administration, as a workplace, will be made to see, if raced structures can be detected in the norms of professional hair/styles.

Firstly, a revision of the politics of black hair internationally and in Sweden will be made. Thereafter, the thesis heads on to the theoretical chapter, where gender, race, class and their intersections are discussed. The theoretical chapter ends by presenting an analytical framework with suggested meanings of black female "professional" and "unprofessional" hair/styles based on U.S scholarship. Following the theory chapter is, the specified aim and research questions will be stated, the anchor of this thesis. Thereafter, a discussion on the single case design, creative interviewing method and qualitative analysis will take place. The thesis proceeds to the analysis section, which will outline and discuss answers of the stated research questions along with empirical evidence. Lastly, a concluding chapter will summarize and discuss the results in relation to the Swedish society today. Next up is, the review of existing literature, where U.S scholars intensively discuss black female hair in relation to beauty standards and medium for social and economic opportunity. As expected, the Swedish academia remains silent in this issue.

## **2. Existing Scholarship on the Politics of Black Hair and Swedish Scholarships on Racialization and Afro Swedes**

This section will present the existing literature concerning the aim of this study. In the international academia there is a lack of studies on professional norms of appearance connected to public institutions. What exists is a rather vast area regarding the role of civil servants, referring to the norms of neutrality. Previous studies on public institutions and the norms of neutrality, directs the work of civil servants. Employees within public institutions are expected to perform their work in an impartial, neutral and predictive manner (Maranto & Skelley 1992, Fox 1992, Selden et al 1999). However, there is nothing on norms of appearance within public institutions and nothing on black (African ancestral) female hair.

This study will therefore direct three broader lines of academic scholarship: the politics of black hair, on one hand, and the two Swedish scholarships on racialization and Afro Swedes, on the other. The following review is thus split into two sections, where the first section covers the more extensive body of scholarship on the politics of black hair. The scholarship of black hair is located in Canada, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, but mainly in the U.S. Lastly, the two last bodies of literature, racialization and Afro Swedes. These scholarships are both located in Sweden and they are two significantly smaller fields. Now, to the international academia on the politics of black hair.

### **2.1 The International Academia on the Politics of Black Hair**

As mentioned, there is a vast body of scholarship on the politics of black hair in the U.S, Canada, the United Kingdom and the Caribbean (e.g. Banks 2000, Mercer 1987, Bellinger 2007, Dash 2006, Thompson 2009, Tate 2007). The general international academic debate concerns hair as a standard of beauty, where scholars have illustrated how hair can function as a standard of beauty, primarily focusing on black female hair in relation to universal western beauty standards (Banks 2000, Mercer 1987, Thompson 2009, Tate 2007, Bellinger 2007, Robinson 2011, Patton 2006).

A description of the idea of universal beauty as presented in this scholarship is: long, shiny, bouncy, (“European”) straight blonde hair. This idea of beauty set a wider range of black women on the opposite end of the universal beauty scale, where black women often describe their hair differently. The effect of this universal (white) beauty standard can thus, undermine black women’s feelings regarding their femininity, as beauty is argued to be a defining characteristic of a woman (Thompson 2009, 849).

In addition to this, a second theme has surfaced, primarily in American research. The theme covers hair as a tool for social mobility and economic opportunities. This line of scholarship introduces the concept of a professional image among black women in professional environments. The main idea is that black women gain in the professional world, by subjecting to western ideals of beauty and professionalism, and downplaying black attributes, such as afro’s and braids etc. (Bellinger 2007, Thompson 2009, Rosette & Dumas 2007). This can be connected to the norms of neutrality within public administration, where an employee might link the norms of neutrality to their appearance and choose to present a “neutral” image in the same way as their role at work. In this sense, a neutral look would be one that is similar to ones colleagues, a look that does not deviate from the general norm in the workplace.

Because of past U.S history involving African enslavement, black hair has been perceived as alluring and sought to touch. Black hair has thus, had a peculiar relationship white people in the U.S context. It has therefore become taboo to touch black hair, as the act historically was perceived as a form racial status and power over the black person (Dash 2006:35). The most popular professional hairstyle among black women in the U.S is thus, straight hair (Rosette & Dumas 2007, 410-411). By adapting to institutional ideals of professional hair, black women can minimize perceived differences and avoid negative stereotypes directed towards them (Rosette & Dumas 2007, 412-416). The following section turns to the Swedish academia on the scholarships racialization and Afro Swedes.

## 2.2 The Swedish Research on Racialization and Afro Swedes

The Swedish academia offers two minor research fields on racialization and on Afro Swedes. Swedish gender research has incorporated the field of critical race and whiteness studies in order to analyze the concept of race. Due to postcolonial and black feminist critique towards “colorblind” feminism and its disability to cover intersectional dimensions, the landscape of Swedish gender studies have been extended (hooks 1982, 2000, Mohanty 2003, Ahmed 2010).

The anti-racist critical race and whiteness studies aims to investigate how race is constructed (Hübinette et al 2012, 45). By acknowledging physical traits as important aspects in the construction of race, Swedish critical race and whiteness scholars aspire to uncover racializing practices that forms hierarchies and structural privileges for some and discriminates others. However, the discussion on racialization and structural racism is impeded due to collective resistance towards matters of race and unwillingness to confront white privileges (Pred 2000, Mattson 2011, Dahl 2010, Lundström 2010, Habel 2000, Groplogo 2005). Therefore, Swedish “*color blindness is the discursive pole of equality*” (Groplogo 2005, 111). Despite this, Swedish scholars continue to argue that race matters, even in Sweden (Hübinette et al 2012, Hübinette et al 2014, Adeniji 2010, Dahl 2010, Habel 2008, Pred 2000, Sawyer 2000).

The second research field in Swedish academia concerns the black population in Sweden referred to as Afro Swedes. This particular field covers the black diaspora, where their specific conditions are monitored and distinct experiences are described. Lena Sawyer introduced this research field in her dissertation “Black and Swedish” (2000). Thereafter, a series of studies were conducted as race, identity, prejudice, racism and discrimination were addressed from the perspectives of Afro Swedes (Sawyer 2000, 2008, Habel 2008a, 2012a, Kalonaitye et al 2008, 2007, Kawesa 2011, Adeniji 2010, 2014). As mentioned in the introduction, an Afrophobia rapport was released this year, where an extensive investigation on Afro Swedes was made describing, hate related crimes, discrimination in job sectors and segregation in settlement (Hübinette et al 2014). Up until today, there has only been one article focusing on black female hair, which described and discussed chemically relaxed hair (Kawesa 2006).



## 2.3 The Need for more Swedish Black Gender Studies

The international academia serves no literature regarding norms of appearance within public institutions. This results in an academic vacuum concerning black women employed within these institutions. International research on the politics of black hair illustrated different country cases, but never the Swedish one. It is therefore interesting to see how black female hair is perceived within Swedish public administration, and what meanings they have. There are reasons to believe that the norms of neutrality are universal and incorporated in public institutions of western democracies. A study on professional norms with black female hair in focus, enables Swedish norms to be pinpointed in order to analyze if they are raced or not.

According to the *Afro Swedish Association* there are approximately 150,000 Afro Swedes currently living in Sweden, Afro Swedes are therefore a considerable minority and important to look at (Wikipedia 2014). Sweden is also an interesting case as the Anglo-Saxon countries already been studied. In contrary to the U.S, Sweden has not been a major trader nor recipient of African slaves. Nor has Sweden been a strong colonial power. This study argues that race is socially constructed and shaped by its distinct history within each country. There is therefore reason to believe, that previous history leaves political legacies in terms of how race is understood and politized. The understandings of blackness and black female hair can thus, be understood differently in Sweden in comparison with the U.S. Next up is the theoretical chapter, where an intersectional approach will be outlined. This analytical tool incorporates gender, race, class and suggested meanings of professional and unprofessional black female hair/styles in the U.S.

### **3. Intersectional Theory: Gender, Race, Class and Meanings of Black Female Hair**

This chapter aims to describe theoretical assumptions and define key concepts employed in this research on professional norms and meanings of black female hair in Swedish public administration. The character of this study is therefore, social constructivist. Social constructivism inhabits a set of theoretical assumptions denoting the social nature of reality. It is an ontological position, which describes objects and categories as parts of a social world, focusing on socially shared meanings and knowledge. Categories of people such as ‘black’ and ‘white’ are not given, they are viewed as results of a creative meaningful process in interactions between human beings (Bryman 2008:692).

In what follows, the intersectional tool of analysis will be addressed by presenting the related social constructions of gender, race and class. The intersectional perspective attempts to understand the intermeshed character of different social divisions that act together (Mcall 2005:1771, Jordan-Zachery 2007: 255-256, Yval-Davis 2006:195-198, de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005:8-11). This complex relationship is illustrated in the case of black women and the socially constructed meanings of their hair. The chapter will end by drawing on prior U.S scholarship on black female hair in order to suggest meanings or “hypotheses” of black female hair/styles and how they are categorized as “professional” and “unprofessional”. The final theoretical framework will be used as an analytical tool for upcoming data. But firstly, a description of gender and femininity will be outlined, followed by definitions of race, blackness and class.

### **3.1 Social Constructions of Gender/Femininity and Race/Blackness/Class**

The term gender refers to ascribed social roles and behavioral patterns of men and women in relation to each other. It is an element of social relationships based on perceived differences between sexes, and a primary way of signifying relationships of power (Scott 1986:1067). Gender studies aims to encompass cultural constructions of men and women, which pose appropriate ideas, expectations and meaning to them. Although, some connections are acknowledged between sex and gender, there is no direct link observed (Scott 1986: 1057).

The constructions of men and women are not fixed and vary depending on time and context (Scott 2010). Every country and culture has their own specific set of ideas on gender, ranging from the amount of acknowledged sexes to the distinct social roles and qualities directed towards men and women, in other words masculinity and femininity. Beauty is one of essential component of femininity, referring to the physical desirability and attractiveness of a woman (Cole & Zucker 2007:1). The concept of beauty is therefore to a great extent a characterizing notion of a woman and affects women in different ways (Thompson 2009:849). Beauty is determined by multiple factors, in this case the female hair is addressed (Thompson 2009: 832, 845). In this sense, the long hair marks a woman as feminine (Thompson 2009:849, 838-839, 842-843, Robinson 2011:359-360, 367, Weitz 2001:672, Rosette & Dumas 2007:410). In addition to this, a woman's hair should have a straight or wavy texture to it, and differentiate from male hairstyles (Robinson 2011:367, Weitz 2001:672).

In many societies, long straight hair has been the standard for heterosexual attractiveness and femininity, which makes an interesting question for women with short hair (Thompson 2009:850, Rosette & Dumas 2007:410). Women with short hair can to some extent be perceived as less feminine, and sometimes even perceived to symbolize other sexual orientations, depending on overall look (Thompson 2009: 851-852, Weitz 2001:679). Despite, the difference of short hairstyles characterized by men and women, there is a widespread assumption that long female hair attracts men. A deliberate choice by a woman to cut her hair short can thus, be perceived to be a way to attract women instead of men (Thompson 2009:850, Weitz 2001:679). The narrow perceptions of femininity and beauty indicate how these ideals are problematic and shaped for heterosexual men. Lastly, mediated images of women can also reinforce these ideals and question perceived femininity of short female hair.

The concept “race” is a more recent idea in comparison to the notions of gender and femininity. Europeans created the term by initially connecting race to the biological nature of humans. Race referred to a specific division of the human species in different social categories, drawn upon physical traits connected to different ancestral geographic origins (Smedley & Smedley 2005:19). Races were set in hierarchical classifications during the eighteenth century, where white Europeans were on the top and the black Africans on the bottom (Smedley & Smedley 2005:20). These outlined races were represented as naturally unequal, unalterable and therefore ranked accordingly.

As the word race was created in the context of colonization, it also helped justify slavery of black people (Smedley & Smedley 2005). Although, the original idea of race emphasized human biogenetic variation exclusively, contemporary science indicates no biological causes for any social, economic, religious and political behavior (Smedley & Smedley 2005:17). The term race has therefore, turned to focus on the social constructions of human differences where both physical features and behavior are addressed (Smedley & Smedley 2005:22). With that said, the following section will describe the social construction of “Blackness”.

“Black” is one of many socially constructed racial categories. Among many of those placed in this category, blackness has become a central identity where black pride and heritage are emphasized, referring to a common African ancestry and history of slavery. A fundamental component of blackness consists therefore of the physiological criteria, where people are categorized as black depending on certain physical characteristics. The term “black” often refers to skin tone and darkness of skin pigmentation (Harris & Khanna 2010:644).

In the U.S context, the dark skin in combination with kinky (tightly curled texture) hair is the most tangible sign of blackness (Mercer 1987:35). However, this stereotyped perception of blackness is in many ways too narrow and unrealistic, due to the wide range of skin complexions and hair textures within the “black group”. Individuals with lighter skin tone and “softer or looser” hair textures can thus be perceived as less black and become rejected due to a narrow perception of “authentic” blackness (Harris & Khanna 2010:650-651).

The social construction of blackness inhabits not only the physiological criteria, but also a class dimension. In the US context, a connection with the working class and blackness is often made.

Simply, another stereotypical view, which denotes “authentic” blacks as those with behavior and experiences associated with the lower working class (Harris & Khanna 2010:644). Some examples of stereotypical behavior and expressions connected to the black U.S working class are: speaking Ebonics or using slang (black English), listening to rap music and dressing in Hip hop clothes. In addition to the previous characteristics, the avoidance of academic achievement, in the pursuit of being street smart rather than book smart, is an essential part of performing blackness within the U.S working class (Harris & Khanna 2010:643).

This stereotyped and narrowed perception of blackness excludes all blacks, who live up to the physiological criteria, but who does not share the experiences or behavior of the working class. Just as the physiological criteria can be stereotyped and excluding, the class dimension can in the same ways exclude blacks depending on their class membership, behavior and appearance. “Blackness” is therefore a socially constructed category based upon human exchanges, flawed with prejudice and to some extent insensitive towards biologic variation, class variation and individual experiences. The defined concepts of gender and femininity along with race, blackness and class will indicate an interacting and problematic nature for black women. By describing the intersectional tool of analysis, connections between the social constructions of femininity, blackness and class can be made in the case of black women and their hair in the U.S context.

### **3.2 The Intersectional Character of Gender, Race and Class**

As alluded to above, the social constructions of gender, race and class are intertwined, and intersect in a peculiar way for black women. It is difficult to understand one without also looking at the other. An intersectional perspective attempts therefore, to question power and inequality within the interwoven perceptions of masculinity, whiteness, heterosexuality, class and their reinforcing markers that creates social divisions (de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005:9). These social divisions are embedded in each other, which makes gender raced and race gendered. The intersectional tool aims is to capture contemporary social relations and identity forms which relate to unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources, with a multi-dimensional analysis (Jordan-Zachery 2007:260-261, de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005:8,11, Mcall 2005:1771). U.S feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw created the intersectional term in the late 1980’s. Originally it denoted the various ways in which race and gender interacted in African American women’s experiences (Crenshaw 1993:139).

Crenshaw claimed that black women were theoretically erased in juridical constellations due to lacking consideration of the intersectional nature of race and gender (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw argued that the American legal system lacked the ability to deal with black women's experiences, and therefore not address discrimination against them adequately (Crenshaw 1989:141). The multi-dimensional experience was in one way or another, an insufficient ground for claiming juridical support and remedy for discrimination (Caldwell 1991, Crenshaw 1989). Refusing to accept this injustice, both Crenshaw (1989) and Caldwell (1991) argued that cases of discrimination does not need to affect all women or all blacks, in order to affect black women in a discriminating way.

Next section will discuss the complex relationship between the social divisions of femininity, blackness and class, which black women are regarded to belong in. By using the intersectional tool, this section will problematize and discuss the theoretical contradictions of being woman/black and being black/woman simultaneously. As this study proceeds, the concepts of femininity and blackness will appear to be flawed due to beauty being raced and blackness being both gendered and classed (Thompson 2009:849, 832, 845, Robinson 2011:367, Weitz 2001:672).

Femininity, concerning beauty and hair is a complex combination between gender, race and class, where kinky hair is to a great extent negatized because of its texture (Mercer 1987:37). The kinky black hair is the opposite of straight hair, and is in many contexts perceived as "ugly" (Mercer 1987:37, Robinson 2011:360). The dominant western (white) beauty paradigm has therefore set black women on the opposite side on the scale of beauty (Mercer 1987:37, Robinson 2011:360). The special character of kinky hair with its difficulty to appear as long as straight hair, makes black female hair perceived as "less feminine" and "less beautiful" (Thompson 2009:831-832, 845, 849, 852, Robinson 2011:367, Weitz 2001:672). The white woman holds thus, the superior ideal of beauty, where white aesthetics is dominating in media in relation to beauty and hair (Thompson 2009:850, 840, Robinson 2011:360, Rosette & Dumas 2007:410).

An effect of mediated ideals of beauty has turned black women in the U.S into deliberate adopters of feminine physical strategies (Cole & Zucker 2007:6, Weitz 2001: 678, Thompson 2009: 851). The extensive use of long straight weaves (artificial extension of hair) by black women indicates how these ideals of femininity have been internalized, even though it collides with their natural “blackness”. This is a concrete example of how black women are trapped in a peculiar position, pending between the perceived notions of beauty (straight long hair) and physiological criteria of blackness (kinky shorter hair) (Thompson 2009: 847-849, 835).

When it comes to blackness and hair texture, black women are affected twice, as black women can be perceived as less black, depending on their hair. Black female hair holds doubled meanings as their femininity and blackness is marked. In contrast to black men, who are rarely questioned as blacks, concerning their hair. Stereotypical blackness, perceives black women with less kinky hair e.g. curly or wavy hair, to be less black or “wannabes” (wanting to be white) even though these hair textures are natural and black too (Harris & Khanna 2010:650-651). Ultimately, blackness is gendered due to its exclusive and inclusive power towards black women due to their hair.

Lastly, the focus is on the classed dimension of blackness in relation to black women and their hair. The incorporated element of class in blackness rejects and marginalizes black middle/upper class members, who speak “clean” and Standard English, with high academic credit. They are perceived as “wannabes” in the eyes of other blacks (Harris & Khanna 2010:652-653). The classed dimension of blackness strikes black women a third time, referring to their hair. During 1920’s U.S, the ultimate sign of middle class membership among black women was the straight hair. The “finer” black women had resources to be pampered by beauticians and thus afford expensive hair treatments (Rooks 1996:75, Mercer 1987:34). Black female hair could therefore signal if a woman was rich or poor and indicate class membership. This specific hair norm is still evident among powerful and upper class black women in the U.S. Black female straight hair norms illustrates, contradicting spheres of femininity, blackness and class (Bellinger 2007:66, Rosette & Dumas 2007:411). In short, black women are expected to live up to “white” femininity and beauty, showcase their physical blackness and behave like a working class woman.

The contradictions of femininity, blackness and class are thus pinpointed by an intersectional analysis, where black women in theory, are set in a complex position. The following section will address the concept of professional norms and how it can be understood in relation to black female hair.

### **3.3 Professional Norms and U.S Black Female Hair/Styles**

As this thesis uses the concepts of professionalism and norms, a description of professional norms must be done. By using the word professional, the connection towards workplaces and professional rooms are made. “Professional appearance” can thus be defined as, a suitable look at work. The word “norms” can be explained as, unwritten rules or unspoken codes within different social contexts (Sunstein 1996). Social norms are connected to attitudes of approval and disapproval of human behavior, which regulates human interaction in different settings (Sunstein 1996).

If an individual breaks the common norms of social behavior in a social context, public disapproval may arise in different forms. It can generate embarrassment or in some cases a desire to hide (Sunstein 1996). The majority in a social context is therefore, the norm setter. Professional hair norms, refers to the hair/styles the majority of employees presents at the workplace. In the first chapter, the norm of neutrality was introduced as a characteristic of public administrations. The norm of neutrality concerned the role of a civil servant and culture of public administration (Maranto & Skelley 1992, Fox 1992, Selden et al 1999).

This thesis argues that norms of neutrality also concern the professional image of civil servants. The norm of neutrality expects a civil servant to present an image that blends in with the majority of employees. A professional image is an appearance that is “neutral” in relation to the other colleagues at the workplace. The norm of neutrality in public administration does not take minorities into consideration, by expecting all employees to present a similar image. The US Army case, illustrates how different categories of people can be discriminated due to regulations based on the norms of neutrality. Usually, the norms of neutrality are not outspoken structures, but are experienced when they are broken. As this chapter continues, professional and unprofessional black female hair/styles along with their intersectional meanings will be presented based on prior U.S scholarship.



U.S political history with its political developments has marked some meanings of contemporary black hair/styles. Afros, dreadlocks, cornrows and braids are some common hairstyles that are referred to as “unprofessional” due to their political attachment to the “Negritude” and “Black power” movements (appendix 2). These movements mobilized black working class members against white supremacy and racism, demanding civil rights and equality. During these movements the black activists promoted black pride by showcasing African aesthetics, with e.g. afro’s, dreadlocks and braids (Dash 2006:30-31, Thompson 2009:831, Mercer 1987:37). These hair/styles were liberating breaks from white bias and became political symbols (Mercer 1987:37, Weitz 2001:680).

The black hairstyle, cornrows can similarly be connected to notions of race and class. Although, the hairstyle is more related to twenty first century Hip hop culture (Thompson 2009:836). Due to Hip hop culture being celebrated by pimps, gangsters and thugs wearing hairstyles such as cornrows, the meanings of violent, ghetto, low class black, are transferred (Thompson 2009:836). The U.S professional world has consequently marked afro’s, dreadlocks, cornrows and other braided hairstyles as politically radical or ghetto (Thompson 2009:832, Bellinger 2007:65). In addition to this, black hair/styles are perceived as unprofessional because they deviate from the “neutral” image of professionalism (Thompson 2009:836).

When a black woman adopts a hairstyle that calls attention to racial minorities, it can reduce her perceived competence, social acceptability and mobility (Thompson 2009:852, Rosette & Dumas 2007:409, Weitz 2001:682). This impedes the black woman in e.g. in the workplace due to her hairstyle being denoted negative meanings (Weitz 2001:682, Thompson 2009:852, Rosette & Dumas 2007:409, Mercer 1987:37). Professional female black hairstyles in the U.S are therefore, straight hairstyles (Banks 2000:39, Bellinger 2007:65, Rosette & Dumas 2007:411). Relaxed (chemically straightened) hair is currently the most popular professional hairstyle choice of black women in U.S today (Rosette & Dumas 2007:411). Weaves, wigs and micro braids are other popular professional hairstyles, where the common attribute is the straight texture (Rosette & Dumas 2007:409, Bellinger 2007:66). The weave is a hair extension made on the own hair, whereas the wig is a “pull over” hairstyle. Micro braids refer to minimal braids made with hair extensions. The selection of micro braids as a “professional” hairstyle can be explained due to its unique way of appearing straight from distance (Robinson 2011:65, Bellinger 2007:66).

An outline of unprofessional and professional black female hair/styles has now been made. The next section will use the intersectional tool to analyze the described U.S black female hair/styles in terms of, gender, race and class. As mentioned, the straight hair is categorized as a professional hairstyle for black women. The hairstyle can be connected to the norm of neutrality and western ideals of femininity and beauty (Rosette & Dumas 2007, Thompson 2009, Bellinger 2007). Women, who strive to live up to the societal view of femininity can thus, choose to conform to this ideal irrespective of race. The straight female hair has to some extent become a universal (Rosette & Dumas 2007, Thompson 2009, Bellinger 2007).

Straight black female hair/styles can in gender and race aspects, refer to internalization of white femininity and norms of neutrality (Rosette & Dumas 2007, Bellinger 2007, Dash 2006, Mercer 1987). In the general eye it is perceived as “neutral” and attractive (Rosette & Dumas 2007:407-408, 416, Bellinger 2007:66) The straight black female hair/styles are also classed due to the expensive and time consuming maintenance, referring to weaves, wigs and micro braids (Bellinger 2007:65-66).

Short cropped hair is another black female hairstyle perceived as professional, in the public, corporate and academic world (Bellinger 2007:66). A black woman with short cropped hair holds other gendered and raced meanings, in contrast to the long straight hair. The short cropped hairstyle can indicate a woman’s boldness to defy the heterosexual “long hair” norm of femininity. In addition to this, she can showcase racial pride due her natural hair texture being conveyed (Thompson 2009:850, Mercer 1987:31, Dash 2006:31, Weitz 2001:680). Short cropped hair resembles the general view of male hairstyles and can risk being perceived as a marker of other sexual orientations (Weitz 2001:679, Thompson 2009:851-852, Rosette & Dumas 2007:411). A black woman with a short cropped hairstyle can thus symbolize gender, race and sexual orientation (Thompson 2009, Weitz 2001). The professional black female hair/styles has now been described and analyzed. Next up, are the unprofessional black female hair/styles.

The unprofessional black female hair/styles in the US, refers to the “unisex” and “deviant” hair/styles, afro, dreadlocks, cornrows and braids (Thompson 2009:852). These hair/styles can be perceived as racial aesthetics related to distinctive minorities, in this case blacks (Thompson 2009:853, Rosette & Dumas 2007:411). The character of the afro hairstyle is depending on hair texture, a thickly curled hairstyle where the hair is let down.

The afro hairstyle can be natural or styled with pre-braiding or combing techniques. In contrary to the afro hairstyle, dreadlocks are multiple strands of hair weaved together with different techniques. Cornrows and braids are other black hairstyles conducted with another technique. Cornrows are the type of braids, which follows the head shape intimately, whereas braids are described as a collection of individually flowing parts. Cornrows and braids are both usually made with a three-strand technique. However, cornrows and braids can also be twisted with a two-strand technique.

Although the mentioned hairstyles are naturally better for the healthiness of black female hair, they are considered as “radical” in the professional world. This impedes black women from wearing them at work (Rosette & Dumas 2007:411, Bellinger 2007:66). The “radicalism” of these hair/styles is related to the norms of neutrality. The e.g. afro hairstyle on a black woman can be understood as, an act of defying norms of neutrality, along with its raced beauty, perceptions of heterosexuality and middle/upper class membership (Weitz 2001:681,683). To choose a black hair/style can thus be, a way of questioning the “white” straight hair as marker of femininity and beauty, by showcasing black aesthetics (Weitz 2001:68, 683).

To simplify my analysis of Swedish professional norms and black female hair/styles, the discussion above can be set schematically. The schematic illustration below presents suggested gendered, raced and classed meanings of professional and unprofessional black female hair/styles in the U.S. One last category is left open in the theoretical framework to allow new meanings to be addressed in the upcoming empirical analysis. The aim is to “test” the suggestions from the U.S case. An intersectional analysis will be conducted in the Swedish case, to explore professional norms and meanings of black female hair/styles in public administration. The upcoming chapter will state the aim and research questions, the heart of this thesis.

### 3.4 Analytical Framework – Meanings of U.S Professional and Unprofessional Female Black Hair/Styles

	<b>Professional Hair/Styles</b>	<b>Unprofessional Hair/Styles</b>
<b>Physical criterias</b>	Chemically relaxed hair, Weave, Wig, Micro braids and short cropped hair	Afros, Dreadlocks, Cornrows and Braids
<b>Gender meaning</b>	Conforming to the norms of neutrality with its raced ideals of femininity and beauty	Showcasing black aesthetics and defying the norms of neutrality with its raced ideals of femininity and beauty
<b>Racial meaning</b>	Conforming to the norms of neutrality along with white norms of professionalism	Portraying racial pride and rejecting the norms of neutrality along with white norms of professionalism
<b>Class meaning</b>	Member of middle/upper class	Member of working class
<b>Other meaning</b>		

## 4. Specified Aim and Research Questions

Based on U.S prior scholarship, this study will describe perceptions of professional norms and apply intersectional theory, to analyze meanings of black female hair/styles in Swedish public administration. More specifically, the thesis asks:

1. What is the hair norm in Swedish public administration?
2. Focusing on black female hair, what gendered, raced and classed meanings set the distinction between professional and unprofessional hair/styles in Swedish public administration?
3. What similarities and dissimilarities are there, in gendered, raced and classed meanings of professional and unprofessional black female hair/styles in the U.S and Sweden?

The following section will describe the research design and methods selected to conduct this study. A single case with semi-structured interviews, twisted with a creative photo elicitation, will be justified through previous methods literature.

## 5. A Qualitative Single Case Study

In order to describe perceptions of professional norms and meanings of black female hair in Swedish public administration, this thesis will use qualitative methods to investigate the Swedish case. In short, this study will employ semi-structured interviews with seven Swedish black women working within public administration. The material from these informants is the primary data, which will be subjected to an intersectional analysis, addressing gendered, raced and classed meanings of black female hair/styles. This chapter will start by presenting the selected single case study design. Thereafter, a discussion concerning interviews as a data collecting method and data will take place. Lastly, this chapter will describe how the upcoming data will be processed and analyzed, in order to form a schematic illustration. Firstly, some preliminary thoughts on the deductive approach of this study will be outlined.

A deductive approach has been selected to guide this study in the different dimensions of black female hair. There are multiple reasons for this decision, some concerning the analysis of data and some concerning the new academic territory of black hair. A deductive approach will assist this study to be conducted in a systematic way, in order to produce a thicker analysis. In short, the deductive approach will use theory in beforehand to guide the organization of coming empirics. The opposite of a deductive approach is, the inductive approach where theory is the generated outcome, through empirical observations (Bryman 2008:4,11). In order to give this study a theoretic fundament, an extensive import of U.S scholarship has been incorporated.

However, this study also aims to generate theory on the Swedish case, and not only test hypotheses on the basis of prior U.S literature. In order to do so, an inductive element has been added, to allow other meanings of black female hair to surface in the Swedish case. The incorporated inductive element will broaden the analysis and enable observations to generate context specific theory on the Swedish case. This study will therefore combine deductive and inductive approaches to take the upcoming analysis even further. Next up is, the single case section, where the design of this study is described.

## 5.1 The Single Case - Sweden

This study will be taking the form of a single case study, where Sweden is the selected case. A case study is characterized by making an intensive analysis of one single focus of interest, a case on its own right (Bryman 2008:52-53). With the U.S case regarding black female hair established in previous chapters, this study will compare but also theorize on the Swedish context by subjecting it as an individual case (Esaiasson et al 2012:108-109). The design of this study is therefore descriptive, but also comparative in its nature. Although the aim is to, capture potential distinctions of the Swedish case concerning black female hair (Esaiasson et al 2012:109).

With that said, I argue that the findings generated from this study can potentially be applicable on cases, such as Norway and Finland. These countries are all democratically governed with similar structures in the public administration. Norway and Finland both inhabit a minority of black people, which are relatively “new” immigrants in comparison to African Americans in the U.S. In short, Sweden, Norway and Finland can be argued to some extent, share similar democratic structures and demographic composition. The findings from the Swedish case findings can thus, potentially generate applicable theory to other cases and potentially become generalized findings.

As this study is conducted in the name of Political science this study subjects Swedish public administration as the main population, rather than the Swedish government or parliament. Public administration is a part of the Swedish state apparatus, where employees are working in governmental purposes. Public servants are in comparison to politicians, neutral representatives of the state, as politicians are appointed as representatives of the people, working with state matters.

This study focuses on professional norms of appearance, where I argue the norms of neutrality to only direct public servants and not politicians. Even though, politicians also are subjected to professional norms of appearance in order to convey credibility, I argue for the norms of professionalism to vary between public servants and politicians. Public servants are expected to present themselves in strict manner in terms of uniformity and neutrality, where politicians face more relaxed norms of professionalism and thus given room for individuality.

In that sense, politicians have more freedom to select a personal or ethnic appearance in their professional environment, in contrary to public servants in neutral institutions, which are more restricted in terms of professional image. The norms of neutrality in Swedish administration can also be connected to other workplaces, such as corporate environments, banking sectors and legal institutions. In other words, this study also has the ability to suggest theory to other populations, where the employees serve as representatives of higher authorities, rather than being individual employees. In the next section, the interviewing method and data will be presented.

## **5.2 Interviews as Data Collecting Method and Data**

This study emphasizes the interviewing method as crucial to collect data and answer the stated research questions (Arksey & Knight 1999, Teorell & Svensson 2007, Bryman 2008:437). Interviewing is a natural way of uncovering and exploring meanings that underpin people's lives, routines, behavior and feelings. The main interest is to discover how social reality is constructed and ordered from the perspectives of the informant (Lantz 1993:18). As this study directs to black female hair in Swedish public administration, the semi-structured informant interview is selected. The seven informants will thus, describe different understandings of black female hairstyles (Esaiasson et al 2012).

Semi-structured interviewing combines a prepared interview guide with room for improvised follow up questions, for understanding and nuancing (see Appendix 1) (Lantz 1993, Bryman 2008, Arksey & Knight 1999, Teorell & Svensson 2007). Although, the processing and categorization of the informant's responses will take great effort, it will enable the investigation of perceptions and the different dimensions of them (Arksey & Knight 1999:32, Lantz 1993:18) The interviewing method is therefore, selected because of its ability to generate richness in responses, by capturing nuances in a verbal dialogue (Lantz 1993:6-7, 34-35). As a creative element and complement to the interviews, I will use photo elicitation in the last part of the interview (Bryman 2008:448, Polkinghorne 2005:13).

Photo elicitation stands for the simple idea of using photograph or images in research interviews (Bryman 2008, Polkinghorne 2005). The selected photos as observational data will be used to highlight and clarify the perceptions of the informants (Polkinghorne 2005:13-14). I will use eight different pictures with one black woman on each photo.



The pictures are selected to represent the two categories of “professional” and “unprofessional” black female hairstyles based on prior U.S scholarship. The eight photographs are all taken from Google and Instagram (InstagramB 2014). Two pictures will illustrate straight hairstyles and two pictures with short cropped hairstyles, symbolizing professional black female hair. The four last pictures will illustrate hairstyles such as, cornrows, dreadlocks and different afro hairstyles, symbolizing unprofessional black female hair (see Appendix 2). The use of photos as observational data will be incorporated in the latter part of the interview, to avoid installing specific mindsets in beforehand. The idea is to let the informants, individually categorize every hairstyle as professional or unprofessional and thereafter analyze them according to their own perceptions of femininity, blackness and class.

Even though, I have selected interviews as my data collecting method, there are some implications with it. The aim was to find eight women to meet and interview, which I failed to accomplish. I also ran into some problems in setting dates for the interviews, which added a technological element to solve these problems. Two of the interviews were conducted through Skype conversations and one via telephone. The interview guide and the observational data were sent to the informants a few minutes before the interview. In addition to this, interviewing is a time consuming method due to the enormous workload, referring to data collection, transcribing and analysis of data (Bryman 2008, Arksey & Knight 1999, Lantz 1993). However, interviews are crucial for this study in order to describe subjective thoughts to analyze perceptions of black female hair. I will be consistent with the interview questions and only use follow-up question such as, how/why/explain/describe/exemplify, for the sake of reliability and consistency (Lantz 1993:16, Arksey & Knight 1999:52-54).

### **5.3 Selection of Sample and Interviewees**

The aim of this study points to black women employed in Swedish public administration. The black women working in public administration are academics located in the middle class, and tough to find. Seven black women that had either worked or are still working in public administration were located. These women will become the sample, as each of them is analyze units in this study (Arksey & Knight 1999:56, Esaiasson 2012:156,160,174, Teorell & Svensson 2007:84). Three informants were located through “Afrotalk”, a Swedish black hair page on Facebook (Facebook 2014).

This page is directed to black men and women and parents to biracial children, where information regarding hair, from afro products to braiding techniques is available. The informants located at “Afrotalk” can be argued as biased in my sample, due to potential “political” views on black hair. In contrary to this, I argue for “Afrotalk” to be a forum with accumulated expertise regarding black hair as this information lacks in other forums. A descriptive announcement of this study along with its aim was made, requesting for participants connected to my population. This is referred to as convenience sampling or “the first best” sampling (Esaiasson et al 2012: 188-189, Teorell & Svensson 2007:84,86, Bryman 2008:391). Two other informants were informed by other connections and wrote to me on Facebook. The first informants suggested the last two informants, as the snowball sampling technique was employed (Arksey & Knight 1999:57, Marsh & Stoker 2002:205, Esaiasson et al 2012:189, Teorell & Svensson 2007:87).

The advert made on Facebook resulted in unbiased selection, due to the women contacting me of interest. The sample was therefore not selected through my own personal connections. The aim was identified in the advert, and the consent of the informants was given (Teorell & Svensson 2007:21). However, the act of volunteering itself indicates a person is in minority due to personal interests or specific knowledge. This may distort the sample by an unfair representation of the population (Arksey & Knight 1999:58). Despite this, the seven informants are able to convey a broader view of the small population, black women working in Swedish public administration. The seven informants include two biracial women, where one was African American and Swedish and the other Tanzanian and Swedish. One woman came from Colombia in South America, another woman from Ghana and one from Ethiopia in Africa. The last two women come from the same African country, Eritrea. The ages of my informants range from 25-60 and they all reside in Stockholm. There is thus a variation in age and national origin in my sample group.

However, the overrepresentation of women from East Africa, namely Ethiopia and Eritrea can become an implication for the results. Either this makes a flawed sample due to a distorted representation of black women in Swedish public administration. In contrast to this, the amount of East African women in my sample can possibly indicate the actual racial composition of black women within this sector. The fact that all informants live in Stockholm becomes a second implication regarding fair representation. With Stockholm being the capital city of Sweden, it inhabits a large population with larger quantities of minorities.

In addition to this, many public institutions are located in Stockholm, which enables these workplaces to employ people with other racial backgrounds than Swedish. This makes Stockholm problematic as a representative city for Sweden as a whole. As this thesis strives to test hypothesis in order to potentially suggest theory and not generalizing claims, I argue for my sample to be acceptable as a pilot study. This study can thus in the future, be altered in both research design, method and sampling to generate generalized findings. For the sake of anonymity and respect to all informants, they have been given pseudonyms. One of the informant's workplace has deliberately not been mentioned in the study, as she specifically requested to be anonymous.

The study is based on informant interviews with seven black women, with both African, Latin and North American ancestry. By placing them in the center of my research, their standpoints and perceptions are elevated, as they are essential to pinpoint the aim of this study. Standpoint means: *"A position in society involving a level of awareness about an individual's social location, from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured"* (Swigonski 1994:390). Black women in Sweden are part of a minority, which can be viewed as a less powerful group. It is therefore, easier for them to address norms in their workplaces because of their minority (norm breaking) position.

Black women can be argued to have a double package of awareness. This means that they are sensitive towards how the majority perceives them, in addition to their own perception. These perspectives are crucial in order to survive in society. The double awareness or double vision among Swedish black women, gives them a more "complete" view of a social reality (Swigonski 1994:390, Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002:319). Proceeding, the last section of this chapter will explain how the interviewing data will be analyzed.

## **5.4 An Intersectional Analysis of the Data**

In order to analyze the transcribed raw data from the interviews, the established theoretical tool in chapter three must be brought back, to structure and systematically analyze the material. The intersectional tool along with an added inductive element will extract meanings of black female hair in Swedish public administration. By deconstructing the intersectional content of this framework, all data can be processed to sort out important and relevant findings.

The intersectional framework is thus turned into five analytical questions which will be posed to the data and answer my research questions. Five analytical questions from the framework are formed and presented below.

1. How is professional black female hair/styles described and exemplified?
2. How is unprofessional black female hair/styles described and exemplified?
3. How is professional black female hair/styles related to their perceptions of femininity, blackness and class?
4. How is unprofessional black female hair/styles related to their perceptions of femininity, blackness and class?
5. How does meanings related to gender, race and class intersect in professional and unprofessional black female hair/styles?

The aim of this study is to generate preliminary understandings about the Swedish case, to produce deeper descriptions and thick accounts of professional norms and meanings of black female hair in Swedish Public Administration (Bryman 2008:373, 378, 391). The final findings can hopefully be used *“for making judgement about possible transferability of findings to other milieux”* (Bryman 2008:378). In that sense, this study has potential to generate interesting findings. Next chapter will present the analyzed data from the interviews by connecting empirics with theory. The findings will also be illustrated in a schematic setting covering intersectional meanings of perceived professional and unprofessional black female hair in Swedish public administration.

## 6. Professional Norms in relation to Black Female Hair

Swedish public administration is without a doubt, a white world. By following the seven informants and their experiences at work, it is evident that they are the only or one of the few black women in their offices. The professional norms in Swedish public administration are therefore shaped according to the Swedish white majority in these institutions. Several informants described prevailing straight hair norms, where short cropped hair and bobs were the “neutral” professional hairstyles. In addition to this, some of the informants also shared their experiences by verbally illustrating scenarios, where their “deviant” hair had been subjected to stares, comments or touching at work. To sum it up, there is a general consensus among the informants that it can be better for black women to conform to the perceived straight hair norm, in order to be taken seriously at work.

Before the analyzed data is outlined, there are some important theoretical concerns that must be addressed. This thesis unfortunately, uses problematic categories, such as “black” and “white”, “afro” and “kinky”, “black hairstyles” and “straight hairstyles” as simple terms to categorize perceived differences. In some cases these terms have been used in binary relations as dichotomies, which are problematic and unrealistic, as they present a simplified and two-dimensional social world. This risk reinforcing these socially constructed categories. Although this study stresses these problems, it is impossible to erase these socially constituted categories, as this study analyzes perceptions of social worlds. This study focuses on black women, who constitute a racial minority in a country where, “white” or “ethnic Swedes” shape the perceived structures.

In the coming section, the term “black” is used as an umbrella term for multiple national identities related to African ancestry. In contrast to “black”, the term “white”, which previously also has been used as an umbrella term for Europeans, refers now mainly to “ethnic Swedes” in the upcoming section. The terms “Afro” and “kinky” hair are also two problematic terms, which can be perceived as synonyms, when they in reality are not. “Afro” hair can both refer to the style of “black” hair when it’s let down, but also be used as an umbrella term for the wide range of “black” hair textures, from kinky to wavy. “Kinky” is thus a name for one specific type of “black” hair texture.

Lastly, the concepts of “black hairstyles” and “straight hairstyles” might also be expressed as binaries, when they in fact are not. Once again “black hairstyles” refers to distinctive hair textures and hairstyles typically associated with black people. However, “straight hairstyles” has multiple meanings depending on what context it is used. Straight hairstyles is sometimes mentioned in reference to “white” people (“whites” in general or “ethnic Swedes”) whereas, “straight hairstyles” in other contexts may refer to both “white” and “black” people, who naturally has or adopts straight hairstyles. As the theoretical concerns of this chapter have been described, the following section will present the analyzed data in this study.

Seven black women have been interviewed, as they all are working or have worked, in different spheres of Swedish public administration. Their responses are divided in three sections, where the first section describes perceived hair norms in Swedish public administration. The second part uses intersectional theory to illustrate gendered, raced and classed meanings in their perceptions of professional and unprofessional black female hair in Swedish public administration. Lastly, the third section compares the U.S and Swedish case, by presenting similarities and dissimilarities in gendered, raced and classed meanings of professional and unprofessional black female hair. This chapter will end with a schematic illustration, summarizing professional and unprofessional black female hair, in an intersectional framework of the Swedish case. Before entering the first section of the analysis a brief background of the seven informants will be outlined.

Safina works as an establishment officer at *Arbetsförmedlingen* (Labor Office). She comes from Ghana and wears her hair in a longer curly hairstyle. The second informant is Meaza, who works as investigator at a *public* workplace. She is biracial and comes from both Tanzania/Sweden and has dreadlocks. The third informant is Jamilah, who is a social worker at *Socialtjänsten* (Social Service). She comes from Eritrea and mostly wears her hair straight.

The fourth informant is Aisha, who works as a project manager at *Stockholms Läns och Landsting*, SLL (Stockholm Countys and Regions, SCR). She is biracial being both African-American/Swedish. At the moment she has long blonde and black braids. The fifth informant is Kimburu, who is a former employee at *Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting*, SKL (Sweden’s Municipalities and Regions, SMR), where she worked as a web administrator. She comes from Colombia and has a semi relaxed (chemically straightened) and curly hairstyle.

The sixth informant is Fatou, who works as a counselor at *Utbildningsförvaltningen* (Department of Education). Fatou comes from Eritrea and wears her hair straight. The seventh and last informant is Mirembe, who works as a project producer at *Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, SKL* (Sweden's Municipalities and Regions, SMR). She comes from Ethiopia and wears her hair in a shorter afro hairstyle. As we proceed, this section will describe perceived hair norms in Swedish public administration.

## 6.1 The Straight Hair Norm and Black Hairstyles as Norm Breakers

The majority of the informants detected a straight hair norm at their workplaces. Safina was the only informant, who completely described a mixed hair norm at the *Labor Office*.

*“When it comes to hair, it is very mixed, but it is important that it is fairly combed. But it's not that I notice that most of them look the same way or have similar hairstyles, it is very varied.”*<sup>1</sup>

Safina could not find a specific pattern or norm related to hairstyles at the *Labor Office*, which she argues is a result of an environment constituted of a broader group of employees. The variety of employees in relation to age, education and experience resulted in a liberal attitude towards different hairstyles at the *Labor Office*. Meaza also shared the perception of a mixed hair norm her *public* workplace.

*“Regarding hair? No, there were a lot of different (hairstyles), younger women in this job have pretty short hair and then we have a few older women with long hair too. So, I did not really perceive a specific norm that you were supposed to have your hair in a certain way.”*<sup>2</sup>

Meaza detected two usual hairstyles at her *public* workplace. Her observation indicated a generational difference in hairstyle preferences, where younger women tended to be more liberal in their selected hairstyles as the older women choose to wear more conservative, long “feminine” hairstyles. Elaborating on the two hairstyles, Meaza addressed the fact, that she was the only black woman at her *public* workplace, referring to her deviant hairstyle. This connects to the general straight hair norm perceived by the other women in this study.

---

<sup>1</sup> Safina's original quote: Vad de gäller hår är det väldigt blandat, men att det ska vara någorlunda kammat. Men det är inte så att jag märker att dom flesta ser likadana ut och har likadana frisyren, utan de är väldigt varierat.

<sup>2</sup> Mezas original quote: Gällande håret? Nej, de var ganska många olika, de flesta yngre kvinnor på det här jobbet, dom har ganska kort hår och sen har man några äldre kvinnor med långt hår också. Så jag uppfattade inte riktigt att de fanns en sån norm, att man skulle ha håret på ett visst sätt.

Meaza, who initially illustrated a mixed hairstyle norm at her *public* workplace, shifted her perception.

*“But it is also true that, I’m the only person there who has an afro at all, or I was the only woman there with African origin, I noticed people staring a bit on my hair, which is, I have dreadlocks.”*<sup>3</sup>

Mezas hairstyle was in this sense, deviant from the straight hair norm, as she was the only one without a straight hairstyle. Her dreadlocks were signaling difference and blackness, due to the unique texture and style of her hair. Later on Meaza attempted to explain the reactions towards her hair.

*“One person thought it was braids, after I had dreads for a year, a colleague commented that I had braids. So she might as well not tell the difference between what it was, and it was pretty much that, I think, maybe.”*<sup>4</sup>

For Meaza, it was made clear, that her dreadlocks were a deviant hairstyle in relation to the straight short cropped and long hairstyles at her *public* workplace. The reference to her dreadlocks as braids indicated a lack of knowledge, where Mezas colleague could not differentiate between the two different hairstyles. Mezas hairstyle was not only different but it also marked her race, where the deviant texture of her dreadlocks reflected her black roots. In contrast to Meaza, Fatou pinpointed a straight hair norm at the *Department of Education* directly. *“They have short hair, blonde/brown hair. Scandinavian hair, like short, short, really short.”*<sup>5</sup>

Following this quote it is fair to say, that the racial composition in the office was homogenous, among Fatous female employees. All of her female colleagues chose to adopt a short cropped hairstyle, which is in the broader societal ideals perceived as masculine haircut, but as a suitable style for women in the professional world. Due to the described attributes of Scandinavian hair, Fatou seems aware of this norm. Fatous claim regarding the straight hair norm goes hand in hand with Mirembes analysis of *SKL*.

---

<sup>3</sup> Mezas original quote: Men så är det också så att, asså jag är den enda personen där som hade ett afro överhuvudtaget, eller jag var den enda kvinnan där med afrikanskt ursprung liksom, och då var de verkligen att de märktes ju att folk glodde lite då på mitt hår, vilket är, jag har ju dreadlocks.

<sup>4</sup> Mezas original quote: En trodde att de var flätor, och då var de en kollega som typ efter att jag hade haft dreads i ett år, kommenterade att jag hade flätor. Så hon kunde liksom inte se skillnaden på vad de var, och de var ganska mycket så tror jag, kanske.

<sup>5</sup> Fatous original quote: De har kort hår, blont/brunt hår. Asså skandinaviskt hår. Kort, kort, asså väldigt kort.



*“There are 450 women in their late middle age and they all have long bobs. It's like the ones I see all the time, if they have curly hair, they have straightened the hair, and everybody has a long bob. It has become their, or, yes, they are some that have super short (hair). It's either or.”*<sup>6</sup>

The majority of Mirembes female colleagues were all in the same age group and had their naturally straight hair, cut in a bob, which is a shoulder length hairstyle. In contrast to the short cropped hairstyle, the bob can be perceived as a more feminine hairstyle due to its length. Even though the bob hairstyle was perceived to most usual hairstyle at *SKL*, Mirembe added that a few of her female colleagues also adopted the short cropped hairstyle. The short cropped hairstyle therefore, remains as an ordinary professional hairstyle within Swedish public administration.

Returning to the straight bob hairstyle norm, Mirembe is aware of the advantages her white colleagues have in accomplishing the bob hairstyle, due to the straight attribute of this hairstyle. This touches the racial dimension of *SKL*, where Mirembe is the only woman with, a afro hairstyle. In this sense, Mirembe is a norm breaker with her afro hairstyle, which becomes a sign of difference and blackness in relation to, the “bob community” at *SKL*. Later on Mirembe described a situation, where her colleague wanted to touch her hair.

*“She said. Oh, Mirre. I will put my fingers in your hair! It's a classic. It looks so beautiful and frizzy and different. Nowadays, it's actually no one who touches my hair without asking. It's actually no one. But it's there, the tension.”*<sup>7</sup>

The described scenario exemplifies, how the kinky texture and style of Mirembes afro hair is perceived as exotic, due to it being different. Even though Mirembes colleague actually did not touch her hair, she expresses her will to do it. This illustrates how black hairstyles are given meaning due to their deviance. The tension Mirembe refers to is the curiosity and desire white people have towards black hair and therefore want to touch it. Just as Mirembe detected a straight bob hair norm at *SKL*, Aisha described the exact same norm at *SLL*. Being aware of the straight hair norm at her workplace, Aisha described the following scenario with a male colleague.

---

<sup>6</sup> Mirembes original quote: Det är 450 kvinnor i övre medelåldern och alla har lång page. Det är liksom dom jag ser hela tiden, har de lockigt hår så har de plattat håret, alla har lång page. Det har blivit deras, eller, jo de finns några som har superkort. Det är antingen eller.

<sup>7</sup> Mirembes original quote: Och då sa hon. Åh, Mirre. Jag kommer stoppa in mina fingrar i ditt hår! Det är ju en klassiker. Det ser så härligt och burrigt och annorlunda ut. Nuförtiden är det faktiskt ingen som tar i mitt hår utan att fråga. Det är det faktiskt inte. Men de finns där, de finns en laddning.

*“I stand in the elevator and the old man says. Can I feel on your braids? And I said, yes. And then he got a (braid). And then he says. They are so fascinating, have you done them by yourself? Yes, they took me eight hours (Aisha). Ah, I think they're really beautiful. And it was okay. Otherwise, somebody can just pass me and just put their fingers in my hair, and that is not okay. And I've also have a phobia for germs. So, it's really disgusting.”*<sup>8</sup>

This scenario indicates how black hairstyles are perceived as exotic, as fascination and curiousness leads to a colleague touching Aishas hair. Aisha's braids in this case, is a deviant hairstyle in relation to the straight bob hair norm at *SLL*. Aisha becomes a norm breaker by showcasing African aesthetics in hairstyling, which makes her an object of fascination due to her “exotic” hairstyle. The touching of black hair in the Swedish public administration illustrates therefore, a unique and strange behavior in professional environments. This can also be perceived as a way to mark a person's difference and constructing Otherness. In this case, Aisha is being raced as black through the act of hair touching. Although, the touching of Aisha's hair was with her consent, she also expresses how some of her colleagues could grab it, when passing her. Jamilah at the *Social Service* described a similar experience.

*“Every time I wear my afro to work, they (her colleagues) always want to touch it, there are a lot of comments about it. It could be that, we are sitting in the break room and people just grab it (the hair) and pull it all the time, which is kind of normal. But it's nothing negative, it's just that it can become a hassle, because everyone touches it, and our hair grows, so many cannot touch it, it's probably better to leave it alone, because the more they touch the hair the more fluffy it gets.”*<sup>9</sup>

The constant talking and repeated hair touching has become disturbing for Jamilah, at the *Social Service*. Even though, Jamilah is uncomfortable with this behavior, she points out that hair touching is a positive act due to curiousness. Despite this, hair touching is one of the main reasons why Jamilah chooses to subject herself to the perceived straight hair norm at the *Social Service*. Both Aisha and Jamilah has experienced norm breaking incidents, where their colleagues have touched, grabbed and pulled their hair, due to a fascination and curiosity, of their black hair.

---

<sup>8</sup> Aishas original quote: Jag står i hissen, så säger gubben. Får jag ta på dina flätor? Så sa jag, javisst. Och då fick han en (fläta). Och så säger han. De är så fascinerande, har du gjort det själv? Javisst, de tog åtta timmar (Aisha). Ah, jag tycker de är jättevackert. Och det var ju helt okej. Annars kan de gå förbi någon som bara stoppar fingrarna i håret, och de är inte okej. Och jag har ju också bacillskräck. Så de är ju liksom jätteäckligt.”

<sup>9</sup> Jamilahs original quote: Varje gång jag har afro på jobbet, så är de alltid så att man ska ta i det, asså de är väldigt mycket kommentarer kring det. Ja, men de kan vara typ att, asså att man sitter i fikarummet och folk kommer och tar i det (håret) och sliter en i håret hela tiden, vilket är typ standard. Men asså de är ju inte något negativt, de är mer att de kan bli jobbigt, eftersom alla ska göra det och sen just de här att, asså vårt hår växer asså, så många kan inte röra i det, de ska nog vara som de är liksom, ju mer dom rör de desto fluffigare blir det.

Unless hair touching is a general and normal behavior in Swedish public administration, this indicates strange behavior in a professional environment, as hair is a part of the body, and therefore both private and personal. The hair touching is a result of the exotic meaning black hair has been given due to its difference. The exotic meaning is connected to the racial meaning where, hair touching becomes an act of racism, where black hair and blackness is constructed. Both Aisha and Jamilah become marked as different and black due to the touching of their hair.

So far, a majority of the interviewees have described perceived straight hair norm at their workplaces. The straight hair norm within these contexts is also perceived as markers of race, which reflects a general homogenous racial composition in Swedish public administration, constituted of white Swedes. Black hairstyles have not only been marked as deviant, in relation to perceived straight hair norms, but they are also given “exotic” meaning due to and fascination and hair touching by other colleagues. The following section focuses on black hair and how perceptions of professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles are often gendered, raced and classed simultaneously.

## **6.2 Intersectional Analysis of Professional and Unprofessional Black Female Hairstyles**

Several of the informants, described professional black female hairstyles on the basis of perceived straight hair norms. This exemplifies how the norm of neutrality within Swedish public administration, defines appropriate hairstyles, setting black women in a complex position. The straight black female hair, such as chemically relaxed, straightened or weaved hairstyles, were referred to as professional, due to them being perceived as “neutral” (racial dimension) and beautiful (gender dimension). The unprofessional black female hairstyles were categorized on the same basis as the professional hairstyles. As the norm of neutrality (race) and ideals of beauty (gender) intersect, they also define e.g. afros and dreadlocks as unprofessional hairstyles because of its “deviant” and “unisexual” character, in relation to perceived straight hair norms. This following section will start off with, analyzing perceptions of black professional hairstyles focusing on gender, race and class.

Mirembe at SKL describes straight hair as professional, in relation to her perception of femininity and beauty. *“I don’t have the soft and flowy, Timotej hair. I can’t use my hair, women use their hair as a way to express themselves. You can curl a lock with it, you can throw it over your shoulder, put it in a ponytail and wiggle with it. That’s an attribute and a very useful one. I don’t have that, my hair is just. I have the Bert and Ernie hair from Sesame Street, so I don’t get that feminine look, absolutely not.”*<sup>10</sup>

Mirembes perception of professional hair describes the long straight hair as beautiful, where the feminine behavior around it, also is a strong attribute for women. But it also touches the racial dimension, where her afro is short and firm, due to its kinky texture. Mirembe feels that she is unable to present this ideal image and feminine behavior of a woman, due to her natural “black” hair. Her perception of her hair becomes unisex, as she compares her hairstyle with a children’s character, and defeminizes her afro hair. Mirembes words illustrate how her perception of professional hair is both gendered and raced at the same time. Jamilah at the *Social Service*, also shares Mirembes perception of professional straight hair and femininity. *“I feel more comfortable in straight hair, I think it simply looks nicer. When I have my hair curly, I look so young, which means that my reliability changes towards the clients. They might think: How old are you? So, my straight hair shows that I’m older and that I take care of myself, that’s how it’s perceived I think. For me it doesn’t really matter, but I’m much more comfortable in the straight (hair).”*<sup>11</sup>

Jamilahs perception of professional hair also directs the gendered and raced aspects, where she feels pretty in her straightened hair. She feels that her young age is compensated by her straight hairstyle, which gives her a professional and mature feminine look. Her perception of her naturally curly hair, points to back to the defeminized perception of black natural hair, where afro hairstyles are not perceived to be feminine. All informants confirmed Mirembes and Jamilahs perceptions of professional straight hair as feminine at the photo elicitation.

---

<sup>10</sup> Mirembes original quote: Jag har ju varken de mjuka svallande, Timotej håret. Jag kan inte använda mitt hår, kvinnor använder ju sitt hår i sitt sätt att uttrycka sig. Man kan snurra en liten lock, man kan slänga det över axeln, man kan slänga det i en tofs och vicka med det. Alltså, de är ju ett attribut och ett väldigt användbart sådant, de har inte jag. Utan mitt hår är ju bara. Jag har ju Bert Ernie håret från Sesame Street, så att jag får inte den feminina förstärkningen, absolut inte.

<sup>11</sup> Jamilahs original quote: Asså jag känner mig bekväm i rakt hår, jag tycker de ser finare ut helt enkelt. När jag har lockigt hår så kan jag se väldigt ung ut, vilket gör att tillförlitligheten förändras inför klienterna. Då kan de bli sådär: Hur gammal är du? Så mitt raka hår visar på att jag är äldre och att jag vårdar mig själv, asså utåt tänker jag. Sen för mig spelar de ju egentligen ingen roll, men jag är mycket bekvämare i det raka.

During the creative part of the interview were observational data was used, almost all informants referred to the two straight hairstyles as professional. It was due to their closeness, to the perceived straight hair norm and their feminine attributes such as length and texture, which categorized the two straight hairstyles as professional. Even though several of the informants expressed that the first hairstyle (1a) was over styled for a work setting, it was still regarded as professional. This illustrates how the gendered dimension of black female hairstyles is an important element, in the perceptions of professional hair. It also shows how perceptions of professional black hairstyles intersects with race, as straight textures are not perceived as natural, for black women. The following section will focus more on the racial dimension of perceived professional black female hairstyles, which is connected to with the previous discussion on gender, femininity and beauty.

The racial analysis of perceived professional black female hairstyles was directly addressed as (white) straight hair by multiple informants. Mezas radical view on black female professional hair, refers the perceived straight hair norm at her *public* workplace.

*“It must be something that they find similar to their hair. And if you're going to have that type of hair, if you have the texture for it, you can put relaxer in it, and maybe then it can work out, but otherwise we're talking weave. We're simply talking about not wearing our own hair.”*<sup>12</sup>

Mezas view of professional hair, goes hand in hand with public administration norms of neutrality, as she argues the need for black hair to be relaxed (chemically straightened) and straight to become “neutral”. In her world, artificial weaving is the closest a black woman can come to fulfilling the straight hair norm. The reason for this is, the special texture of black hair, being unable to present the ideal straight hair quality. Mirembe, Fatou and Jamilah also share Mezas perception of black female professional hair, as straight hair.

Mirembe at *SKL*: *“I think if I had long flowing hair, or had this bob that most have, I would be accepted in a different way. I cannot say that I am unaccepted, but I can feel that they're many wondering who I am when I walk through the doors, checking that I have this badge. Nobody lets me pass by and just open the door and say, go ahead. I have to kind of, show off my badge and say - I belong here.”*<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Mezas original quote: Det måste ju vara någonting som dom tycker är som deras hår. Och om man ska ha sånt hår, så om man har den hårtexuren liksom, kan man rakpermanenta sitt hår, så kanske de hade funkat, men annars så snackar vi liksom weave. Vi pratar liksom om någonting där man helt enkelt inte har sitt eget hår.

<sup>13</sup> Mirembes original quote: Jag tror om jag hade då ett långt svallande hår, eller hade den här pagen som då de flesta har. Så skulle jag liksom, accepteras på ett annat sätt. Och jag kan ju inte säga att jag blir oaccepterad, men jag kan ju känna av att de är många som undrar vem jag är när jag går igenom dörrar, och kollar att jag har den här brickan. De är ingen som släpper igenom mig och bara öppnar dörren och säger varsågod, jag måste liksom visa upp min bricka och säga - jag hör hit.

Mirembe emphasizes the texture and length of straight black hair, which holds both gendered and raced aspects, in her perception of professional hair. Mirembes perception of professional hair is connected to her own experience, as she has a shorter afro hairstyle. In contrast to Mirembe, Fatou only points to the racial dimension in her perception of professional straight black hair. Fatou at the *Department of Education*: “It sounds really sad, but it’s probably straight or wavy, just don’t stand out. It becomes much with you being brown, only that makes you stand out.” <sup>14</sup>

Fatou points at the racial dimension of professional black hair, where the straight texture is important to blend in. Her personal experience stresses the point, that her black skin already is deviant and should therefore, not be amplified. Her perception of straight black hair as professional is thus connected to the norm of neutrality and strives to blend in with her colleagues. Jamilah shares the same view on professional straight black hair.

Jamilah at the *Social Service*: “Typically for me, it’s straightened, because that is, what I feel is groomed. That’s the thing really.” <sup>15</sup>

Jamilah equates groomed hair as straight hair. In her world, that is the way a black woman can present a proper hairstyle. This indicates how black hair texture has been negatized and perceived as unprofessional. The racial dimension in her perception of professional hair, favors the straight hair as it is perceived to be more tended. Jamilahs view of professional hair is thus a, result of internalizing white norms of professionalism, where black hairstyles are deviant from the general hair norms at the *Social Service*.

A couple of informants also claimed that the straight hair has to some extent become a black norm. Fatou at the *Department of Education*, summarizes this point.

“This is so hard for me, because nowadays these are the type of black girls I see. This has become black too. It is very seldom I see blacks with afros, so for me this is the usual. This is how black female hair looks like now. With many hours of struggling. Absolutely.” <sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Fatous original quote: Det låter jättesorgligt, men de är nog rakt eller vågigt, asså de får bara inte sticka ut. Det blir för mycket de räcker med att man är brun, bara det gör att man sticker ut.

<sup>15</sup> Jamilahs original quote: En typiskt för mig själv, så tänker jag plattat, för de är vad jag tycker är vårdat. Det är det som är grejen.

<sup>16</sup> Meazas original quote: Asså, de är så svårt för mig, för att nuförtiden är de egentligen bara den här typen av svarta tjejer jag ser. Att de har blivit som att de här också är svart. De är sällan jag ser svarta med afro, så för mig är de vanligt liksom, såhär ser svarta tjejers hår ut nu. Med många timmars kämpande. Absolut.

Kimburu, a former employee at SKL, also stresses the black straight hair norm.

*“There are so many who relaxes their hair, we haven’t even talked about that. So, even if you have long hair, it’s flat and straight. I believe that makes many white people think that we really have straight and flat and shiny hair. Because in all the videos they (black women) wear it “natural”, so I think they might be thinking: Why don’t you have flat and straight hair like Beyoncé had in that video? That it becomes such a contrast to what they view as normal, maybe.”*<sup>17</sup>

Fatou and Kimburu, claims that black women with hairstyles, such as afro’s, dreadlocks and braids are rare, in their perception of black female hair in Sweden. Fatou at the *Department of Education*, precede her argument, by claiming that black straight hair norms can be problematic.

*“For the few who don’t really want to (straighten their hair), they’re forced in the end, because you just get weirder and weirder with time. So, I absolutely believe that it could be forced on the few people that choose to: Nah, you know what? I think my hair is neat and I want to keep it like this. It has become: Nah, you’re not having that. You might have difficulties getting a job after an interview, because you simply seem different. And in the end they’ll say: Whatever, I’ll just wear my hair straight for the interview.”*

<sup>18</sup>

The straight hair has become “natural” black hair for some people and for other, the result of a chemical or heated process. Fatous and Kimburus previous quotes, indicates how hairstyles such as afro’s, dreadlocks are becoming more rare due to the extensive straight hair norms connected to black women. The perceived straight hair norm among black women in Sweden can thus to some extent, be a part of a possible explanation to the exotic meaning of typically black hairstyles, leading to hair touching. Although, the seven informants have varying perceptions of black hairstyles, they all agreed on, that it becomes problematic when black hair or afro hair is referred to as one singular texture where, in reality it ranges from kinky to wavy textures. In addition to this, they agreed on that, “black” hair in general, is not characterized by straight textures.

---

<sup>17</sup> Kimburus original quote: Det är väldigt många som rakpermanentar håret, de har vi ju inte ens pratat om. Då är de ju liksom, även om du har långt hår så är de ju platt och rakt liksom. Det är väl så jag tror att många vita människor inte har fattat att vi egentligen inte har rakt och platt och blankt hår. Men att de blir som på videos som har de “naturligt”, så tror jag att de kan vara det tänket, men varför har du inte så platt och rakt hår som Beyoncé hade i den där videon? Så att någonting sånt kanske, att de kanske blir en sån kontrast till de som dom ser som normalt liksom.

<sup>18</sup> Fatous original quote: För att de få som inte vill egentligen (platta håret), de är illa tvungna till slut, för att du blir bara konstigare och konstigare med tiden. Så jag tror absolut att de kan bli forcerat över den lilla mängden som väljer att: Nä, vet du vad? Jag tycker de är skitsnyggt och jag vill ha kvar det såhär. Så har det blivit: Nä, du ska inte ha det. Du kanske inte har lättare att få jobb efter arbetsintervjun, du verkar helt enkelt annorlunda. Och de blir till slut: Skitsamma, jag har rakt hår på arbetsintervjun.

This section of professional black female hair turns to the classed dimension, where some of the informants made a correlation, between straight black female hair and middle/upper class memberships. Fatou at the *Department of Education*, summarizes these perceptions in the following quote.

*“I think of the first lady, where we have a dark black woman. Many people have respect for this woman, and I have never seen her with an afro I think, she has straight hair. And then of course, the ones who look up to Beyoncé, she is just getting whiter and whiter and blonder and blonder. It’s understandable that young people see it in that way that it has become classy to appear in that way. The richer you get, the straighter hair you have. I think so.”*<sup>19</sup>

Fatous quote regarding straight hair and class comes from images in media of successful black women with straight hairstyles. She illustrates how, middle/upper class membership can be synonymous with straight black hair. For Fatou there is an evident straight hair norm among rich black women in the U.S context. In contrast to Fatou, Meaza at her *public* workplace also makes another type of connection between black straight hair and class, referring to the weave hairstyle.

*“A person who has a convincing e.g. weave or lace wig, which makes other people think that it can be her own hair, or not even thinking about it. That is for me, or rather I know that it’s so damn expensive. That person who can spend so much money, either has that money, or bets all her money on it.”*<sup>20</sup>

The high cost of weaves makes Meaza emphasize the class dimension in this type of professional, straight hairstyle. She describes that weaves are expensive and can vary in cost depending on how “natural” they appear. Meaza also addresses the possibility of “regular” black women investing all their money in a weave, which can make them appear as “rich”, when they in reality are broke. The informants have now described professional black female hair, as straight hair, ranging from relaxed, to straightened and weaved hair. The intersectional analysis of black female straight hair, has illustrated how femininity/beauty and “neutrality” are reflected in the straight hairstyle.

---

<sup>19</sup> Fatous original quote: Jag tänker på the first lady, där har vi en mörk svart kvinna. Många har respekt för damen och jag har aldrig sett henne med afro tror jag, hon har ju rakt hår. Sen har vi ju människor som många ser upp till och de är ju till exempel Beyoncé, hon blir ju bara vitare och vitare och blondare och blondare. Så de är väl förståeligt att ungdomar ser de så, de har blivit klass att vara så. Ju rikare du blir, ju rakare hår har du. Det tror jag.

<sup>20</sup> Meazas original quote: Asså en person som har en övertygande t.ex. weave eller lace wig, asså att andra personer kan tänka att de där kan vara hennes egna hår, eller inte ens tänker på det, så för mig, så vet jag ju att de kostar jävligt mycket pengar. Den som kan lägga ut så mycket pengar, antingen är de någon som har så mycket pengar eller så är det någon som satsar alla sina pengar på det.



Lastly, some of the informants illustrated their perceptions of black straight hair and class, by correlating it to middle/upper class memberships. The second part of this section will analyze the perceptions of unprofessional black female hairstyles with the intersectional tool, as gendered, raced and classed meanings are detected. In short, hairstyles such as afro's and dreadlocks are perceived as unprofessional due to, being unisex and deviant in relation perceived straight hair norms in Swedish public administration. The perceptions of unprofessional black female hairstyles is thus, categorized on the same basis as the professional black female hairstyles. The following quotes will once again show the intersecting nature of race and gender in the case of black female hair.

Mirembe at *SKL* categorizes her afro hairstyle as unprofessional due to her perception of professional black female hair.

*“That’s my hair. And I’m very aware of that. To have a natural afro, not processed in any way is wrong. Because it’s a look, that’s not classified as okay. We have a picture of how we want women to look and I don’t match the picture, with my wild afro. My short and wild afro, don’t fit into the standards we have in common.”*<sup>21</sup>

Mirembes perception of unprofessional black female hair is clearly connected to her own hairstyle, which is a natural afro. She claims that the societal image of femininity and professionalism exclude her appearance, which marks her black hairstyle as unisex and deviant. Mirembe is therefore, deliberately compensating for her unprofessional black hair.

*“I know how to behave and how to, now I say it, to compensate for my African appearance. That’s why I wear a blazer every day. I think that, if I would come into work with my everyday clothes, I would be treated differently. Without a doubt. That’s one of the cards I use in my professionalism.”*<sup>22</sup>

Mirembes perception of professional black hair is thus a combination of the norms neutrality, along with societal views of femininity and beauty. The means that the long straight hair carries double meanings, which she is unable to live up to. Fatou at the *Department of Education* also addresses the racial aspect of unprofessional black hair.

---

<sup>21</sup> Mirembes original quote: Där ligger jag. Nämen, verkligen så. Och jag är väldigt medveten om det. Att ha naturligt afro som inte är preparerad på något sätt, de är liksom fel. Därför att de är ett utseende som inte klassas som okej. Vi har en bild av hur vi vill att kvinnan ska se ut och jag stämmer inte överrens med den bilden, med mitt vilda afro. Mitt ganska korta vilda afro, passar inte in i den normbilden som vi gemensamt har.

<sup>22</sup> Mirembes original quote: Jag vet hur jag ska bete och hur jag ska göra för att, nu säger jag det, för att kompensera afro utseendet. Därför har jag kavaj varje dag. Jag tror att om jag skulle komma i mina vardagskläder, så skulle jag bli bemött annorlunda, de är jag övertygad om. Så de är ju ett av dom kort jag använder i min professionalitet.

*“Because you already stand out, everyone is already a different color overall. The hair that Swedes and other Scandinavians have is straight. It (the straight hair) does not stand out, because it falls along with the face and everything. If you would come with an Afro, you would stand out, it’s (the afro hair) everywhere and it becomes very much (black skin and afro hair) at the same time.”* <sup>23</sup>

Fatou makes an interesting argument, where she addresses the afro hairstyle as inappropriate, due to breaking of two norms simultaneously. Fatou would with her afro hairstyle at work, become deviant in two dimensions, her black skin and her naturally big curly hair. Her analysis of the *Department of Education* indicates how her workplace is white in both skin and hair aspects. Black hairstyles therefore, continue to be complex in the professional environment. Meaza at her public workplace, shares the same perception as Fatou, on unprofessional hair related to beauty. In the following quote Meaza describes a scenario where her dreadlocks received a comment at her *public* workplace.

*“‘No, do get those, they are so ugly’. But I’ll be honest and say, that white women or women who don’t originate from Africa, consider afro hair as a problem and as something you don’t want to have. It’s very obvious, and it’s not the first time I’ve noticed it as well. To have an afro, moreover, I choose to accentuate my afro, by having dreadlocks. It’s like: Why do you do that? Why, when you can have it in another way?”* <sup>24</sup>

This scenario stressed the two points Mirembe first addressed, how black hairstyles is perceived to be problematic, in the presentation of a feminine and neutral image, in the professional environment. The scenario is an example how the norms of neutrality in Swedish public administration are broken, which causes verbal sanctions. Mezas dreadlocks were perceived as “ugly”, in relation to societal ideas of femininity, where beautiful hair is long and straight. The previous scenario exemplifies how black hairstyles such as afro’s and dreadlocks, are categorized as unprofessional due to their perceived disabilities, to present a “neutral” and feminine appearance.

---

<sup>23</sup> Fatous original quote: För att man sticker redan ut, alla är ju redan en annan färg överlag. Hår som svenskar och andra skandinavier har, de är ju rakt. Det sticker inte ut för det är jämt med ansiktet och allting. Skulle man komma med afro, du sticker ju ut, de går ut (afro håret) och de blir väldigt mycket på en gång.

<sup>24</sup> Mezas original quote: “Nej, skaffa inte det, de är så fult.” Men jag ska vara ärlig och säga att vita kvinnor eller kvinnor som inte har ursprung i Afrika, tycker att afro är liksom ett problem och att de är något som man inte vill ha. Det är väldigt uppenbart och de är inte första gången som man märker det liksom. Utan att ha ett afro, dessutom väljer jag att accentuera mitt afro, genom att ha dreadlocks. Det är liksom: Varför gör man så? Varför, när man ändå kan ha det på ett annat sätt?”

Meaza and Safina elaborate on the difficulties black hairstyles may face in relation to western ideals beauty standards.

Meaza at her *public* workplace: “*Since it’s deviant in the sense, that you don’t have the long flowing hair, it has to be beautiful in another way, and it should be really neat. And it comes from those who don’t have afro hair themselves, simply because they are the ones (colleagues) who judge.*” <sup>25</sup>

Safina at the *Labor Office*: “*If a person chooses to have a big afro hairstyle, I think it might be more acceptable if you wear a headband or put on a barrette somewhere, to spice it up a bit.*” <sup>26</sup>

Both Meaza and Safina describe the general perception of black hairstyles as less feminine. This raises the compensation factor again, where black women have to work up their “loss” of feminine attributes in their black hairstyles. Meaza means that black hairstyles needs to be extra neat to become accepted as beautiful. Whereas Safina argues for the need of feminine amplification by accessories, as black hairstyles can be perceived as more unisex than feminine. The same analysis surfaced during the photo elicitation, where images of black women with afro’s and dreadlocks were referred to feminine, depending on length of hair, but mostly upon facial features, make up and earrings. A majority of the informants perceived thus, the actual hairstyles as more unisex, where afro’s and dreadlocks were not considered to signal femininity in itself.

The informants leads thus to the conclusion, that perceived black hairstyles such as afro’s and dreadlocks are in need of feminine amplification to present a feminine look, due to their disabilities to stand as feminine on their own. Next section covers the perception of unprofessional black female hairstyles from the racial dimension. Safina at the *Labor Office* talks about prejudice towards afro hairstyles.

“*Somehow the big and frizzy hair is linked to a personality that is a little more fuzzy, hippie-like and unserious. And I don’t know where I got it from, but that’s my impression.*” <sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Meazas original quote: Eftersom man är liksom avvikande i den bemärkelsen, man har inte långt flödande hår, så ska de vara vackert på ett annat sätt, och då ska de vara riktigt snyggt. Och de kommer ju från de som inte har afro själva, helt enkelt för att de (kollegorna) dömer.

<sup>26</sup> Safina’s original quote: Alltså, om man väljer att ha ett stort afro hår utsläppt nu, så tror jag att de kanske är mer accepterat om man har något pannband eller sätter något hårspänne någonstans, piffar till det lite så.

<sup>27</sup> Safinas original quote: På något vänster så är liksom stort och burrigt kopplat till en personlighet som är lite mer flummig, hippieaktig och oseriös. Och jag vet de fasiken var de kommer ifrån, men jag har lite det intrycket. Det är väl också kopplat till någon skönhetsnorm, kan jag tänka mig.

Safina argues that there are preconceived meanings regarding hairstyles such as the afro. Safinas perception of afro hair as unprofessional is connected to potential negative prejudices, which makes afro textures denoted as unserious. The afro hairstyle is therefore not a “safe card” in the professional environment. Kimburu, a *former employee at SKL* also analyzes the afro hairstyle in connection to the norms of neutrality.

*“It is obvious that if you wear your hair down in a wild afro, the risk is that people will talk more about your hair than why you are there. You’ll have to accept that and get used to it. So, it’s about choosing what choose you want with a meeting.”*<sup>28</sup>

Kimburus perception of professional hair relates to the norm of neutrality, where a professional hairstyle should not receive attention and be “neutral.” Even though both Safina and Kimburu have no problems having afro hairstyles at work, they are both aware of the negative (attention gatherer and negative prejudice) sides to it. This raises another question. Are black women alone, subjected to negative prejudice related to their afro hairstyles, because them being of another color, or would the same negative prejudice be directed towards white women with “big” hairstyles? The general perception is that, norm breaking becomes more noticed when a woman breaks two at the same time, in comparison to one. As a white woman with big hair, you may break the norms of neutrality, but as a black woman with big hair you may break two norms at the same time.

Several informants have shared stories, which illustrated this specific claim. This makes both Kimburu and Safina refer to the bun as professional hairstyle instead of the afro, where it is perceived to live up to the norms of neutrality in these contexts. However, Safina claims that the racial dimension is still evident in the bun hairstyle.

*“If you compare someone’s bun, that has a curly afro (texture) in comparison to someone who has tight (straight) hair in a bun, then I think the tight bun would be considered a little more serious, goal focused. Simply, different characteristics, it sounds so racist, but yes. There are different characteristics connected to various hairstyles.”*<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Kimburus original quote: Sen så är de ju klart att har du liksom helt utsläppt och bara vilt afro så är risken större att folk pratar mer om ditt hår än varför du är där. Så att de får man ju liksom ta på något sätt, de är vad man är van med. Så man får välja, vad vill jag med det här mötet liksom.

<sup>29</sup> Safinas original quote: Asså ska man jämföra någon med en bun, att man ser att de är lockigt afro i jämförelse med någon som har stramt hår uppsatt i en bun, så tror jag att den strama uppsatta bunen skulle anses lite mer seriös, allvarlig, mål fokuserad. Olika egenskaper helt enkelt, det låter rasistiskt så, men ja. Olika egenskaper kopplar man till olika frisyreer.

Safinas differentiating between a curly afro textured bun and a straight bun, illustrates the raced perception of professional hair, as she explicitly points to straight textures being perceived as more serious than afro textures. Turning to the photo elicitation again, a majority of informants categorized the afro and dreadlocks as unprofessional. The main reasons for this were, connected to their “deviance” of the perceived straight hair norm, unisex character and negative prejudice. The dreadlock hairstyle particularly, was by far the most negatively connoted where prejudices ranged from being “unserious”, having a “bad personal hygiene” and being a “weed smoking hippie”. The previous section has now demonstrated, how the intersecting ideals of beauty and norms of neutrality defines afro’s and dreadlocks and unprofessional hairstyles because of them being unisex and deviant, in relation to the perceived straight hair norm in Swedish public administration.

The last analysis is the classed aspect of unprofessional black female hair, which was rarely addressed. One informant mentioned, it being rare to see middle/upper class members with dreadlocks. In short, the higher class the less dreadlocks. Overall, the informants never made class connections to different black female hairstyles in Sweden. The absent class dimension of the informants own analysis illustrate, how the perception of societal divisions differs from the U.S case. The next section is the last part of this chapter, where a comparison between the U.S and Swedish case will be made. This section will describe similarities and dissimilarities of perceived professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles, based on the intersectional analysis made previously. Concluding, a schematic illustration will summarize the findings of the Swedish case study, at the end of this chapter.

### **6.3 Comparison: US and Swedish meanings of Black Female Hairstyles**

The results of this study illustrate both similarities and dissimilarities in comparison to U.S research. The intersectional discussions on gendered and raced meanings of professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles are to a great extent similar. Some of the mentioned professional black female hairstyles, such as relaxed hair and weaves and short cropped hairstyles, were also defined as professional in the Swedish context. The straight black hair is therefore perceived as professional in both the American and Swedish context, where emphasis was set on the femininity and beauty of straight long hair. Straight black hair was also referred to as professional in a neutral sense, due to its similar texture to the perceived straight hair norm in both countries.

This makes black female professional hairstyles both gendered and raced. Turning to the unprofessional hairstyles in both U.S and Sweden, were the afros and dreadlocks. These hairstyles were perceived as unprofessional on the same basis as the professional hairstyles. Gender and race clashed once again, where afros and dreadlocks particularly were perceived as unisex hairstyles, which deviated from the perceived straight hair norms. This refers back to blackness, and how it's to some extent gendered as male, where several informants stressed the need of feminine amplification for black women wearing afro's or dreadlocks.

In addition to this, the perceived black hairstyles also failed in presenting a professional "neutral" look, where afro's and dreadlocks are perceived as unusual and deviant in professional environments, and to some extent among the black women in general. However, this study also illustrated differences in the comparison with the U.S case. The dissimilarities refer to, the class dimensions of perceived professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles. Professional straight hairstyles in the U.S context were clear markers of middle and upper class membership. However, the Swedish case did not indicate any class dimensions in relation to black female hairstyles in general. Some of the informants were aware of the correlation between straight hair and class in the U.S, but not in their own context.

A second difference between the US and Swedish cases, concerns the repeated touching of black hair in Swedish public administration. This study illustrated scenarios, where white colleagues with and without consent subjected black women to hair touching in the professional environment. Touching of black hair relates to an exotic meaning of black hair, as touching is an act of fascination and curiousness. The exotic meaning is also related to the racial meaning, where hair touching becomes an act of racing and constructing blackness. In contrary to the Swedish case, touching of black hair is tabooed in the US, due to prior American history of African enslavement. Hair touching was at that time and in that context an act of racial superiority, it has therefore marked, touching of black hair as something negative. Touching of black hair in Swedish public administration shows thus, how the different histories of U.S and Sweden, marks hair touching in different ways. Hair touching also indicates to some extent, a lack of racial consciousness in Sweden, in comparison to the U.S. The findings of this case study will now be summarized schematically.

The intersectional framework will illustrate gendered, raced, classed and exotic meanings of professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles, in Swedish public administration. Following this chapter is the concluding chapter, which summarizes the results and discusses them, in relation to the situation in the Swedish society today.

## 6.4 Analytical Framework – Meanings of Swedish Professional and Unprofessional Black Female Hair/Styles

	<b>Professional Hair/Styles</b>	<b>Unprofessional Hair/Styles</b>
<b>Physical criteria</b>	Chemically relaxed or straightened hair, Weaves, Bobs, Buns and short cropped hair	Afros, Dreadlocks and Braids
<b>Gender meaning</b>	Conforming to the norms of neutrality along with raced ideals of femininity and beauty	Showcasing black aesthetics and defying the norms of neutrality along with its raced ideals of femininity and beauty
<b>Race meaning</b>	Conforming to the norms of neutrality and white professionalism	Portraying racial pride and rejecting the norms of neutrality and white professionalism
<b>Class meaning</b>	None	None
<b>Exotic meaning</b>	None	Fascination and curiousness of black hair, leading to touching of hair

## 7. Conclusion: Understandings of Black Female Hair in Swedish Public Administration

*“Hair is the basic natural symbol of the things people want to be... and its social-cultural significance should not be underestimated.” (Thompson 2009:833).*

Hair is rarely left natural, it is mostly worked upon with human hands as cultural practices, filled with meanings and value (Banks 2000:26, Mercer 1987:34). Black female hair is thus a product of socialization, which symbolizes her gender, race and class. The seven informants of this study has contributed to this study in multiple ways, I will therefore conclude the previous analysis with a few interesting points.

As the informants constituted of a few black women, or the only black woman at their workplaces, the racial composition in Swedish public administration is perceived to be white, where several informants described their colleagues, as white Swedes. This also connects to the perceived straight hair norm at almost all workplaces, making black straight hair perceived as professional. Several of the informants expressed perceptions of professional hair, where ideals of beauty and norms of neutrality coincided.

Afro, dreadlocks and braids, which are perceived as black hairstyles, has received attention at the informant’s workplaces. A couple of informants experienced stares, comments and repeated hair touching, marking them as “different” due to their black hair textures and hairstyles. This can possibly illustrate a strange behavior towards black women within the Swedish public administration. Some of the informants therefore, speculate or argue that altering their hair textures, by making it straight or putting it up in a bun, is needed to create a professional image. The straight hair have also turned into a black hair norm, where some of the informants perceived it as more unusual to have black hair/styles, than to have it relaxed or straightened.

Hairstyles such as afro’s and dreadlocks are not only rare according to the informants, they are also negatively connoted. The analysis illustrates, how perceived black hair/styles can, indicate a personality as hippie-like and unserious. The perceptions of the informants also reveals that black women with perceived black hairstyles may face a tougher struggle, in presenting a feminine and “neutral” image.



The perceived straight hair norms of the informants ultimately challenge the few employees with other textures and hairstyles, which black women can have. Proceeding to the class dimension, some of the informants also detected a potential correlation between straight hair and class. The stated connection referred to U.S black female celebrities in straight hairstyles, such as Michelle Obama and Beyoncé. Despite this correlation, none of the informants mentioned any class dimension related to black hairstyles in the Swedish context. Concluding: Is it for better for black women working within public administration to “play it straight”? According to the findings of this study, the suggested answer is straightforward. Yes.

## **7.1 Contribution to the International and Swedish Academia**

As previously stated, this study contributes to both international and Swedish academia. This study generates suggestions on prevailing norms of neutrality and lack of diversity within Swedish public administration. By comparing this study to previous scholarship on the U.S case, both similarities and dissimilarities can be detected. The intersectional analysis of professional black female hairstyles conveyed similar results regarding gender and race, where straight hair is both perceived as feminine and professional due to its neutrality.

In contrast to professional hairstyles, afro’s, dreadlocks and braids, were categorized as unprofessional on the same basis, in relation to the perceived straight hair norm. The perceived black hairstyles, such as afro’s, dreadlocks and braids were perceived as both unisex and deviant, illustrating how gender and race intersect. The distinctive categorization of professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles in the U.S and Sweden illustrates the intersectional dimension, as beauty and femininity to some extent is raced. The U.S case, conveyed class aspects related to the different categorizations of black female hairstyles, where straight hairstyles were perceived as middle/upper class markers and afro’s, dreadlocks and braided hairstyles, as low class markers.

In contrast to this, the Swedish case did not indicate any class dimension in professional and unprofessional black female hairstyles. Further on, an interesting distinction concerning touching of black hair in professional environments was detected. The touching of black hair, which is generally a tabooed in the U.S context, is by some the Swedish informants described as, a continuous behavior in their workplaces.

However, this study can only attempt to theorize on future generalizations due to its “subjective” character designed for a minimal sample. To generate generalizing claims, this study must be conducted in a wider scope, where larger samples of Swedish black women within Swedish public administration, randomly can be selected and be studied through surveys. By conducting such a study, room for generalizations can be made on the basis of large and representable samples. This will also create possibilities to study different workplaces by comparing experiences and attitudes of black women working, in Swedish public administration.

As mentioned in the methods chapter, this study can be replicated in multiple populations and cases. Studies on professional norms in relation to black hair, is not only restricted to workplaces within public administration. This study can also be replicated in workplaces connected to legal institutions, corporate environments and banking sectors, which also are connected to professional norms of neutrality. In addition to these populations, there are also possibilities to replicate this study on other cases. I argue that Norway and Finland as Scandinavian countries, with similar histories, political structures and population of black minority, may illustrate similar results as the Swedish case.

## **7.2 Come on, Girl. It's just Hair?**

By the multiple reactions I have received concerning this study, it is obvious that there are different ways to tackle the topic of black female hair. One can look at hair as material, as a part of the human body or as a part of social constructions. This study chooses to study black female hair as a part of the human body, with its own denoted meanings, as social constructions, which can shift depending on context. If we can agree that hair texture and hairstyles can be a symbol and marker of social identities and difference, such as femininity and race, we can advance to discuss a range of topics on the basis of this thesis. I claim that this study raises a questions concerning white normality, lack of diversity and racial consciousness in Sweden, 2014. According to this study, Swedish public administration has proven to be white world, where norms of professional hair, have become raced due to the majority of white employees. Lack of diversity among the public servants is also illustrated by the reactions towards black female hairstyles. The prevailing norms of neutrality are thus in a sense, against diversity, because it directs an unusual behavior towards the few black women, who are perceived to stand out by making them feel “different”.

Ultimately, this study raises questions regarding white structures and raced norms within our society, which treats black women working in the public administration in an a different way. This study suggests that, there are evident norms of neutrality in Swedish public administration. In addition to this, this study describes how black women are subjected to these norms, where individual selection of aesthetics is perceived to be restricted, due to experiences of norm breaking incidents. I remember a conversation regarding this topic, where a friend attempted to twist my argument by stating following: *“Well, why can’t a lawyer have pink hair and a banker can’t wear an afro?”*

I see the point, I do. The point was that both hairstyles break the norm of neutrality, within the legal and banking sector. However, a fundamental distinction was not addressed. While individuals freely can choose not to dye their hair pink, which black individual can stop their hair from growing kinky, curly or wavy? So, when specific looks or physical traits receive certain treatment because of its natural “deviance” (e.g. afro hairstyle). When does the line cross from curiousness to prejudice?

Now. Is it still just hair? I don’t think so.

## 8. Bibliography

Adeniji, Anna (2010) "Jag har aldrig sett dig som svart" *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 1-2:83-87.

Adeniji, Anna (2014) "Searching for words: Becoming mixed race, black and Swedish" in *Afro-Nordic landscapes: Equality and race in Northern Europe*, Michael McEachrane ed. New York & London: Routledge, 149–161.

Aftonbladet (2014) "Därför Startar Vi Rummet" *Website of Aftonbladet*. Available at URL <http://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/article18202766.ab> (accessed on January 20, 2014)

Ahmed, Sarah (2010) "A Phenomenology of Whiteness" *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 1-2: 49-69.

Arksey Hilary, Knight Peter (1999) *Interviewing for Social Scientists*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Banks, Ingrid (2000) *Hair Matters: Beauty, power, and Black women's consciousness*. New York and London: New York University Press.

Bellinger, Whitney (2007) "Why African American Women Try To Obtain 'Good' Hair" *Sociological Viewpoints*, 63- 72.

Bryman, Alan (2008) *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Caldwell M Paulette (1991) "A Hair Piece: Perspectives On The Intersection Of Race And Gender" *Duke Law Journal*: 365-396.

Cole R Elizabeth, Zucker N Alyssa (2007) "Black and White Women's perspectives on Femininity" *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 13(1):1–9.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989) "Demarginalizing The Intersection Of Race And Sex: A Black Feminist Critique Of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" *HeinOnline -- U. Chi. Legal F* (166):139-167.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1993) "Beyond Racism and Misogyny" in *Words that Wound M.* Matsuda, C. Lawrence and K. Crenshaw eds. Boulder: Westview Press, 111-132.

Dahl, Ulrika (2010) "Rapport från Vithetshavet" *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 1-2:70-74.

Dash, Paul (2006) "Black hair culture, politics and change" *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 10(1):27-37.

de los Reyes Paulina, Mulinari Diana (2005) *Intersektionalitet: kritiska reflektioner över o(jäm)likhetens landskap*. Malmö: Liber AB.

Esaiasson Peter, Gilljam Mikael, Oscarsson Henrik, Wägnerud Lena (2012) *Metodpraktikan: Konsten Att Studera Samhälle, Individ och Marknad*. Vällingby: Elanders Sverige AB.

Facebook (2014) "Afrotalk" *Facebook Group*. Available at URL <https://www.facebook.com/groups/664589803582155/> (accessed on March 10, 2014)

Fox J Charles (1992) "What do we Mean When we Say Professionalism? A Language Usage Analysis for Public Administration." *The American Review of Public Administration* 22: 1-17.

Groglopo, Adrian (2005) "Betraktelsen- rasistiska ordningar, subversiva hållningar" in *Bortom rasism i Europa- visioner för ett annat samhälle*, Magnus Dahlstedt and Ingemar Lindberg, eds. Stockholm: Agora, 108-124.

Habel, Ylva (2008a) "Whiteness Swedish Style" *Slut* 1(2):41–51.

Habel, Ylva (2012a) "Challenging Swedish exceptionalism? Teaching while Black" in *Education in the black diaspora: Perspectives, challenges, and prospects*, Kassie Freeman & Ethan Johnson ed. New York: Routledge, 99–122.

Harris A Cherise, Khanna Nikki (2010) "Black Is, Black Ain't: Biracials, Middle-Class Blacks, And The Social Constructions Of Blackness" *Sociological Spectrum: Mid-South Sociological Association* 30(6):639-670.

hooks, bell (1982) *Ain't I a woman: black women and feminism*. London: Pluto press.

hooks, bell (2000) "Black Women. Shaping Feminist Theory" in *The Black Feminist Reader*, 131-145.

Hübinette Tobias, Hörnfeldt Helena, Farahani Fataneh and Rosales León René (2012) "Om ras och vithet i ett samtida Sverige" Tumba: Mångkulturellt centrum, 41-75.

Hübinette Tobias, Kawesa Victoria, Beshir Samson (2014) *Afrofobi: En kunskapsöversikt över Afrosvenskarnas situation i dagens Sverige*. Stockholm: Mångkulturellt Centrum.

Kalonaityté, Viktorija, Kawesa Victoria, Tedros Adiam (2007) "Att färgas av Sverige: upplevelser av diskriminering och rasism bland ungdomar med afrikansk bakgrund i Sverige." Stockholm: Ombudsmannen mot etnisk diskriminering

Kalonaityte, Viktorija, Kawesa Victoria, Tedros Adiam (2008) "Svarta (s) strategier: att hantera rasism och diskriminering som svart svensk." *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift* 15, 3-4:210-220.

Kawesa, Victoria (2006) "Ain't I my hair?" *Slut*.

InstagramA (2014) "Svart Kvinna" *Instagram Account of SvartKvinna*. Available at URL <http://instagram.com/svartkvinna> (accessed on March 27, 2014)

InstagramB (2014) "Natural Hair Daily" *Instagram Account of Natural Hair Daily*. Available at URL <http://instagram.com/naturalhairdaily> (accessed on February 23, 2014)

Jordan-Zachery S Julia (2007) "Am I a Black Woman or a Woman Who Is Black? A Few Thoughts on the Meaning of Intersectionality" *Politics & Gender* 3(2):254-263.

Lantz, Annika (1993) *Intervjumetodik: Den professionellt genomförda intervjun*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Lundström, Catrin (2010) "Transnationell vithet: Svenska migrantkvinnor i USA och Singapore" *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 1-2:25-45.

Maranto Robert, Skelley B Douglas (1992) "Neutrality: An Enduring Principle of the Federal Service." *The American Review of Public Administration* 22:173-187.

Marsh David, Stoker Gerry (2002) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Mattson, Katarina (2011) "Genus och vithet i den intersektionella vändningen" *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 1-2:6-22.

Mcall, Leslie (2005) "The Complexity of Intersectionality" *The University of Chicago Press* 30(3):1771-1800.

Mercer, Kobena (1987) "Black Hair/Style Politics" *new formations* 3:33-54.

Metro (2014) "Svart kvinna hänger ut rasism och sexism" *Website of Metro*. Available at URL <http://www.metro.se/nyheter/svart-kvinna-hanger-ut-rasism-och-sexism/EVHnck!6lnTmwGc2IxxM/> (accessed on March 27, 2014)

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (2003) *Feminism utan gränser – avkoloniserad teori, praktiserad solidaritet*. Stockholm: Tankekraft förlag.

New Hampshire Public Radio (2014) "Pentagon To Review Army Hair Requirements After Controversy" *Webpage of New Hampshire Public Radio*. Available from URL <http://nhpr.org/post/pentagon-review-army-hair-requirements-after-controversy> (accessed on May 20, 2014)

New York Times (2014) "Army's Ban on Some Popular Hairstyles Raises Ire of Black Female Soldiers" *Webpage of New York Times*. Available from URL [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/us/politics/armys-ban-on-some-popular-hairstyles-raises-ire-of-black-female-soldiers.html?smid=fb-share&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/us/politics/armys-ban-on-some-popular-hairstyles-raises-ire-of-black-female-soldiers.html?smid=fb-share&_r=1) (accessed on April 20, 2014)

Patton Owens, Tracey (2006) "Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair? African American Women and Their Struggles with Beauty, Body Image, and Hair" *NWSA Journal* 18(2):25-51.

Pred, Allan (2000) *Even in Sweden: racism, racialized spaces and the popular geographical imagination*. London: University of California Press, LTD.

Polkinghorne E Donald (2005) "Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research" *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52(2):137-145.

Robinson L Cynthia (2011) "Hair as Race: Why "Good Hair" May Be Bad for Black Females" *Howard Journal of Communications* 22(4):358-376.

Rooks M Noliwe (1996) *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African American Women*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Rosette Shelby Ashleigh, Dumas L Tracy (2007) "The Hair Dilemma: Conform to Mainstream Expectations Or Emphasize Racial Identity" *Duke Journal Of Gender Law & Policy* 14:407-421.

Sawyer, Lena (2000) *Black and Swedish: Racialization and the cultural politics of belonging in Stockholm, Sweden*. Michigan, UMI Dissertation Services.

Sawyer, Lena (2008) "Engendering 'race' in calls for diasporic community in Sweden" *Feminist Review* 90(1):87-105.

Scott W Joan (1986) "Gender: a useful category of historical analysis" *The American historical review* 91(5):1053-1075.

Scott W Joan (2010) "Gender: still a useful category of historical analysis" *Diogenes* 225: 7-14.



Selden Coleman Sally, Brewer A Gene, Brudney L Jeffrey (1999) "Reconciling Competing Values in Public Administration: Understanding the Administrative Role Concept." *Administration & Society* 31:171-204.

Smedley Audrey, Smedley D Brian (2005) "Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem Is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race" *American Psychologist* 60(1):16–26.

Stoetzler Marcel, Yuval-Davis Nira (2002) "Standpoint theory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination" *Feminist Theory* 3(3):315–333.

Sunstein R Cass (1996) "Social Norms and Social Roles" *Columbia Law Review* 96(4):903-968.

Svenska Dagbladet (2014) "Serie om vithetsnorm och hudfärg" *Webpage of Svenska Dagbladet*. Available at URL [http://www.svd.se/nyheter/idagsidan/serie-om-vithetsnorm-och-hudfarg\\_3394324.svd](http://www.svd.se/nyheter/idagsidan/serie-om-vithetsnorm-och-hudfarg_3394324.svd) (accessed on March 29, 2014)

Sveriges Television, SVT (2014) "Raskortet" *Online documentary*. Available at URL <http://www.svt.se/dokumentarfilm/raskortet> (accessed on March 27, 2014)

SVT Aktuellt (2014) "Utblick" *Online News Program*. Available at URL <http://www.svt.se/aktuellt/se-program/31-3-21-00-textat?autostart=true> (accessed on March 31, 2014)

Swigonski E Mary (1994) "The Logic of Feminist Standpoint Theory for Social Work Research" *Social Work* 39(4):387-393.

Tate, Shirley (2007) "Black beauty: Shade, hair and anti-racist aesthetics" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(2):300-319.

Teorell Jan, Svensson Torsten (2007) *Att fråga och att svara*. Malmö: Liber AB.

Thompson, Cheryl (2009) "Black Women, Beauty, and Hair as a Matter of Being" *Women's Studies: An inter-disciplinary journal* 38(8):831-856.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006) "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3):193–209.

Weitz, Rose (2001) "Women And Their Hair: Seeking Power through Resistance and Accommodation" *Gender & Society* 15(5):667-686.

Wikipedia (2014) "Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund" *Webpage on Wikipedia*. Available at URL [http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrosvenskarnas\\_riksf%C3%B6rbun](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrosvenskarnas_riksf%C3%B6rbun) (accessed on February 24, 2014)

## **9. Appendix 1 – Interview Guide**

### **HAIR NORMS IN WORKSPACE**

1. Are there any expectations concerning professional appearance towards the employees at your workplace?
2. Are there any expectations regarding hairstyling at your workplace?
3. How would you describe the prevailing hair norms at your workplace?
4. Are there any advantages in living up to these standards?
5. Are there any special expectations on how black hair should be worn or styled at your workplace?
6. Is it easy to live up to these expectations?
7. Are there any professional disadvantages or advantages with black hair at your workplace?
8. Have you ever experienced a situation at work where your hair has been in focus – where someone has stared, commented or wanted to touch your hair?

### **PROFESSIONAL AND UNPROFESSIONAL BLACK FEMALE**

#### **HAIR/STYLES**

9. What is/are professional female black hair/styles? Can you exemplify these?
10. How do you relate this/these professional hair/styles to your perception of femininity?
11. How do you relate this/these professional hair/styles to your perception of blackness?
12. How do you relate this/these professional hair/styles to your perception of class?
13. What is/are unprofessional female black hair/styles? Can you exemplify these?
14. How do you relate this/these unprofessional hair/styles to your perception of femininity?
15. How do you relate this/these unprofessional hair/styles to your perception of blackness?
16. How do you relate this/these unprofessional hair/styles to your perception of class?

#### **PERCEPTIONS OF OBSERVATIONAL DATA**

17. How would you categorize this hair/style? Professional or unprofessional?
18. In what ways, is this a professional hair/style or in what ways, is this unprofessional hair/style?
19. How do you relate this hair/style to your perception of femininity?
20. How do you relate this hair/style to your perception of blackness?
21. How do you relate this hair/style to your perception of class?

## Appendix 2 – Observational Data

1A)



1B)



2A)



2B)



3A - CORNROWS)



3B - DREADLOCKS)



4A - AFRO HAIRSTYLE)



4B - AFRO HAIRSTYLE)

