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Reading Rap

*Feminist Interventions in Men and Masculinity
Research*

KALLE BERGGREN



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Abstract

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The present thesis explores how masculinity is constructed and negotiated in relation to race, class and sexuality in hip hop in Sweden. Theoretically, the study contributes to the increasing use of contemporary feminist theory in men and masculinity research. In so doing, it brings into dialogue poststructuralist feminism, feminist phenomenology, intersectionality and queer theory. These theoretical perspectives are put to use in a discourse analysis of rap lyrics by 38 rap artists in Sweden from the period 1991-2011. The thesis is based on the following four articles:

Sticky masculinity: Post-structuralism, phenomenology and subjectivity in critical studies on men explores how poststructuralist feminism and feminist phenomenology can advance the understanding of subjectivity within men and masculinity research. Drawing on Sara Ahmed, and offering re-readings of John Stoltenberg and Victor Seidler, the article develops the notion of “sticky masculinity”.

Degrees of intersectionality: Male rap artists in Sweden negotiating class, race and gender analyzes how class, race, gender, and to some extent sexuality, intersect in rap lyrics by male artists. It shows how critiques of class and race inequalities in these lyrics intersect with normative notions of gender and sexuality. Drawing on this empirical analysis, the article suggests that the notion of “degrees of intersectionality” can be helpful in thinking about masculinity from an intersectional perspective.

‘No homo’: Straight inoculations and the queering of masculinity in Swedish hip hop explores the boundary work performed by male artists regarding sexuality categories. In particular, it analyzes how heterosexuality is sustained, given the affection expressed among male peers. To this end, the article develops the notion of “straight inoculations” to account for the rhetorical means by which heterosexual identities are sustained in a contested terrain.

Hip hop feminism in Sweden: Intersectionality, feminist critique and female masculinity investigates lyrics by female artists in the male-dominated hip hop genre. The analysis shows how critique of gender inequality is a central theme in these lyrics, ranging from the hip hop scene to politics and men’s violence against women. The article also analyzes how female rappers both critique and perform masculinity.

Keywords: hip hop, rap lyrics, men and masculinity, feminist theory, intersectionality, queer theory, poststructuralism, feminist phenomenology, discourse analysis, cultural studies, popular music, gender, sexuality, race, class

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List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which are referred to in the text by their short title.

- I Berggren, Kalle (2014). Sticky Masculinity: Post-structuralism, Phenomenology and Subjectivity in Critical Studies on Men. *Men and Masculinities*, 17(3):231–252
- II Berggren, Kalle (2013). Degrees of Intersectionality: Male Rap Artists in Sweden Negotiating Class, Race and Gender. *Culture Unbound – Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 5:189–211
- III Berggren, Kalle (2012). ‘No homo’: Straight Inoculations and the Queering of Masculinity in Swedish Hip Hop. *Norma – Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 7(1):50–66
- IV Berggren, Kalle (2014). Hip Hop Feminism in Sweden: Intersectionality, Feminist Critique and Female Masculinity. *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 21(3):233–250

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Introduction

Why does a white female rapper describe herself as a paradox within hip hop? What does it mean that a male rapper claims that he loves his boys – no homo? How do notions of gender, sexuality, race and class come into play when the police are being called fags in rap lyrics, for harassing poor workers in the racialized suburbs of Stockholm? And how come a male rapper says he wouldn't back away from war?

The connection between masculinity and hip hop is intriguing. While some regard the genre as imbued with sexist forms of masculinity, others point to the racism implied in the singling out of one specific cultural form as inherently problematic. As Kimberlé Crenshaw among others has argued, there is a need for a more complex analysis of meaning-making within hip hop, which does not limit attention to just one category (Crenshaw 1991).

As the questions above indicate, norms of masculinity are prominent in Swedish hip hop, as well as related to race, class and sexuality. How can discourses about these categories of inequality¹ be described and understood in rap lyrics in Sweden? And how can an empirical analysis of these discourses contribute to our theoretical understanding of the social construction of masculinity?

These are the concerns of the present thesis, which analyzes rap lyrics by 38 artists in Sweden. The study focuses on how the themes of gender, sexuality, race and class are discursively constructed and negotiated. This empirical analysis serves as a case for theory development within men and masculinity research. This is a subset of interdisciplinary gender research which has developed critical analyses of men's practices and norms of masculinity, but which has also been criticized for its theoretical homogeneity. Based on the empirical analysis of rap lyrics, the present thesis contributes to the exploration of what increased attention to contemporary feminist theory can accomplish within men and masculinity research. I will first outline the theoretical landscape to which *Reading Rap* contributes, and then describe how the empirical study fits with these theoretical concerns.

¹ I use the expression *categories of inequality* in order to stress *both* that it is a question of categorization, which could always have been different, *and* that these categorizations are connected to patterns of social inequality. The intersectional and poststructuralist theoretical approach is developed further in the last section of this overview chapter.

The problem: The feminist theory deficit in men and masculinity research

Gender inequality has been an important topic in sociology ever since the women founders of the discipline (writing in the 1830-1930 period) – Harriet Martineau, Anna Julia Cooper, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Jane Addams and Marianne Weber – made it central to their work (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007). A main focus has been on making visible women’s experiences, situations, contributions and strategies in what Gilman in 1911 called *our androcentric culture* (Gilman 1911/2001). The other side of the coin, however, is the category of men. As Simone de Beauvoir pointed out in clear terms in 1949: “the woman problem has always been a man’s problem” (de Beauvoir 1949/2010, 148). In the 1980s this insight was developed into a more focused body of scholarly writing on men and masculinity (Brod 1987; Connell 1987; Hearn 1987; Kimmel 1987). The ambition has been, in Jeff Hearn’s words, to both name men as men and to deconstruct the category of men (Hearn and Collinson 1994). There is now a recognizable “men and masculinities” body of literature, including international journals, handbooks and encyclopedias.² This work is variously referred to as “Masculinity studies”, “Critical studies on men”, or “The sociology of masculinity”. Taken together, these labels quite accurately describe this body of research as being about men and masculinity, utilizing critical perspectives, and dominated by sociologists. In the present study, I make no effort to distinguish between such labels, and have taken the liberty of opting for a varied use of terms, including the simple and neutral formulation “Men and masculinity research”.³

Despite the proliferation of empirical research on men and masculinity in a wide range of different settings, there has been comparatively little theoretical development. The dominant theory, Raewyn Connell’s theory of “hegemonic masculinity”, was developed in the 1980s and still remains a central concern for many men and masculinity scholars (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985; Connell 1987; Connell 1995). A then innovative and influential blend of patriarchy and hegemony theory, Connell’s theory emphasizes men’s power over women, but also asymmetrical power relations between different groups of men and masculinities, namely the hegemonic, the complicit, the

² Journals include *Men and masculinities* and *Norma – International journal for masculinity studies*. Key publications include *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities* (Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell 2005) and *International Encyclopedia of men and masculinities* (Flood et al. 2007). There are also a number of recent international edited volumes such as *Men, masculinities and methodologies* (Pini and Pease 2013), *European perspectives on men and masculinities* (Hearn and Pringle 2006), *Men and masculinities around the world – transforming men’s practices* (Ruspini et al. 2011).

³ Where I use terms such as “men”, “masculinity”, “male”, “women”, “femininity”, “female”, etc. I refer to that which is seen as such in our contemporary culture. The reasons for avoiding the notion of “masculinities” in the plural are developed in *Degrees of intersectionality*.

subordinated and the marginalized ones. In contrast to this dominance of one theoretical perspective, the trajectory of feminist theory in the last few decades has included rich and complex developments with regard to poststructuralism, phenomenology, intersectionality and queer theory – the four traditions under consideration in the present work – among other directions. As Chris Beasley has consistently pointed out:

The subfield of Masculinity Studies is not only dominated by one theoretical trajectory but [...] the field is still dominated by a small number of writers. Where Feminist and Sexuality Studies host a dizzying variety of positions, writers, concepts, debates and topics, Masculinity Studies is heavily indebted to one writer, Bob (R.W.) Connell. Connell is almost without exception quoted or cited or implicitly referenced in every masculinity publication. (Beasley 2005, 191)

There is thus what I would call a *feminist theory deficit* within men and masculinity research. This is a problem of credibility for a body of research which claims to be based on and in dialogue with feminism, but it also hampers the understanding of men and masculinity as relational social constructions, processes and phenomena (Petersen 1998; Whitehead 2002; Beasley 2005; 2012; 2013; see also Nordberg 2001). In a world where gender inequalities are alarmingly stubborn, there is a pressing need for research that makes use of available theoretical resources in order to understand and transform oppressive practices and norms associated with men and masculinity. The present study is thus intended as a contribution to the exploration of what contemporary feminist theory can accomplish within men and masculinity research.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that contemporary feminist theory is not simply an entity that can somehow be transferred without complications into masculinity studies. Contemporary feminist theory not only contains a series of interesting theoretical ideas which can be put to productive use in empirical studies, but also includes critical analyses of how the very stories about feminist theory are constructed and told. Of particular interest here is Clare Hemmings' instructive study on the narrativity of feminist theory (Hemmings 2011). Analyzing a range of academic journals, Hemmings identifies three dominant narratives about the trajectory of contemporary feminist theory. In *progress narratives* we have moved from the homogeneity and essentialism of the 1970s to today's more sophisticated poststructuralist and intersectional approaches. In contrast, in *loss narratives* we have lost the political force of the 1970s women's movement to an increasingly abstract feminism flourishing in neoliberal academia. And in *return narratives* we may have been seduced by poststructuralist and linguistic turns, but we now know better and can return to the important questions of materiality, albeit in new ways. Without going into the many interesting points Hemmings makes about these stories, it is evident that they reveal a

significant distance between contemporary feminist theory and men and masculinity research. In other words, there is an absence of men and masculinity research in the dominant narratives of contemporary feminist theory, and a converse absence of these theoretical narratives within men and masculinity research.

Instead, the dominant story in men and masculinity research is much more about being content with the theoretical status quo. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity has a solid status, and other theoretical ideas are often considered only to the extent that they can be incorporated into a Connellian framework. To pick one illustrative example, in a recent article the Danish sociologists of masculinity, Christensen and Jensen, offer a useful critique of Connell's theory from an intersectionality perspective, which in its central respects resonates with the arguments presented in this thesis (Christensen and Jensen 2014). However, while the authors are quite clear about the relative benefits of an intersectional perspective, they cannot abandon the hegemonic masculinity framework because:

there is *no doubt* that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is so deeply anchored in the theoretical history of masculinity research that "throwing the *baby* out with the bathwater" is both *undesirable and impossible* (Christensen and Jensen 2014, 72 my emphasis)

The assumption described with unusual clarity here is that alternatives to Connell's theory are seen as *undesirable and impossible*, which is quite a remarkable claim. Furthermore, there can be *no doubt* about this, since the theory of hegemonic masculinity is imagined as the *baby* of men and masculinity research (the choice of metaphor is perhaps not merely a coincidence here). However, the idea that there is only one legitimate perspective obscures the range of theoretical perspectives which de facto have been used to study men and masculinity (regardless of their respective merits). The assertion of a single 'correct' perspective also discourages attempts to work with other, perhaps more contemporary perspectives. Since the connection between topic and theory can be imagined as being so strong, it is perhaps no surprise that we now see a growing parallel body of feminist research which includes the topics of men and/or masculinity but which is not usually or straightforwardly considered part of masculinity studies. There are several recent examples of such work from the Swedish context, influenced by intersectionality and/or queer theory (Sörensdotter 2008; Sandberg 2011; Alinia 2013; Olovsson Lööf 2014). Even within an explicit men and masculinity research context, similar changes are now taking place. In a useful collection of recent work on men and masculinity in Sweden⁴, editors Lucas Gottzén and Rickard Jonsson summarize this change of attitude:

⁴ For overviews of men and masculinity research in Sweden, see Balkmar and Pringle 2006 and Hearn et al. 2012.

In order to get beyond the binary logics [of dominant theories of masculinity] masculinity researchers have during the last decade instead drawn inspiration from queer theory, discourse theory, science and technology studies, post-colonialism, poststructuralism, intersectionality and discursive psychology. (Gottzén and Jonsson 2012a, 17 my translation)

I would only add that this theoretical shift is just at its beginning, especially in relation to international men and masculinity research where the Connell-only narrative is still influential. While some important steps have thus been taken, there is still much work to be done, and the present study both draws on and contributes to the emerging ‘wave’ of work on the topic of men and masculinity that makes use of contemporary feminist theoretical perspectives. In keeping with Hemmings’ focus on the element of storytelling in theoretical writing, I wish to employ contemporary feminist theory in a way which is clear about its benefits over Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, but which also avoids overly simplified *progress narratives*. I find it important to both make use of contemporary feminist theory and draw on the many interesting things that have been said in masculinity research (Pascoe 2007). Indeed, I argue that taking contemporary feminist theory seriously in relation to men and masculinity may not only entail bringing in some interesting theories, but may also offer an opportunity to shed new light on some of what has already been said within men and masculinity research. The key to progress in these respects may lie in seeing men and masculinity less as a *field* with one established theoretical outlook, and more as a *topic* which has been, currently is, and will continue to be, analyzed from a variety of feminist perspectives.

The study: Hip hop in Sweden

The usefulness of theoretical considerations, such as the ones outlined above, is best assessed in relation to empirical material. In turn, empirical material can serve as “a resource for developing theoretical ideas through the active mobilization and problematization of existing frameworks” (Alvesson and Kärreman 2011, 12). In order to explore the questions regarding what contemporary feminist theory can accomplish in relation to men and masculinity, the present study focuses on discourses in hip hop in Sweden. In so doing, the study takes a *cultural sociology*, and more specifically, a *cultural studies* approach. Approaches in cultural sociology typically differ in their take on meaning-making and power relations. In one perspective, the cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu is immensely interested in power relations, whereas meaning-making is reduced to an epiphenomenon whose main function is to signal and reproduce “distinction” in class relations (Bourdieu 1984). The reverse position is taken in Jeffrey Alexander’s “strong program”

of cultural sociology, which pays proper attention to meaning-making, but also insists on its relative autonomy from power relations (Alexander 2003). In contrast to both these perspectives, a *cultural studies* approach is interested in connecting cultural meanings and power relations, typically by taking popular culture seriously (Hall 1997; Lindgren 2009; Ahmed 2010). The usefulness of the latter approach is evident in terms of hip hop, a cultural genre which is flooded with discourses about gender, sexuality, race and class.

Hip hop is a musical genre and a subculture that emerged in the Bronx, New York, in the 1970s (Chang 2005). As a subculture, hip hop consists of the “four elements” of graffiti (visual art), breakdance (dance), dj:ing (music), and rap (words). As a musical genre, it denotes “a specific kind of music defined by rhyming lyrics and a multi-textual collage-style composition” (Perry 2004, 8). Over the last few decades, hip hop has spread worldwide, and as Tony Mitchell points out:

There is ample evidence here that rap and hip-hop have become just as ‘rooted in the local’ in Naples, Marseilles, Amsterdam, the Basque region, Berlin, Sofia, Sydney, Auckland, or the Shibuya district of Tokyo as it ever was in Compton, South Central Los Angeles, or the South Bronx. (Mitchell 2001a, 10)

One prevailing image of hip hop is that of a “Black music” or “Black culture” (Rose 1994; Basu and Lemelle 2006). There are historical connections with the oral tradition within African-American communities. At the same time, even within the US, there have always been other ethnic or racial groups participating in hip hop (McFarland 2008). Looking beyond the US, the idea of hip hop as black music is rendered complicated by the variety of participants in different contexts. In this respect, Swedish hip hop has a variety of participants, white and non-white alike. Similarly, hip hop is often imagined as an inherently sexist and homophobic man’s culture. But while few would doubt that these elements exist, such claims can be fuelled by racist agendas which displace sexism and heterosexism outside a white majority population (Butler 1997a, 23; Crenshaw 1991). Furthermore, there have always been women involved in hip hop culture, sometimes radically challenging norms of gender and sexuality (Pough et al. 2007). Yet another image in use is that of youth culture (Ntarangwi 2009; Clay 2012). There is a certain amount of truth in this description as well, but it is equally true that there is not only one “hip hop generation” anymore.

Therefore, the idea that hip hop can accurately be described in terms of one single category does not hold. As Kimberlé Crenshaw argued in 1991, an *intersectional perspective* is needed in order to avoid reductionism in interpreting hip hop (Crenshaw 1991). Thus, instead of seeing hip hop as the cultural expressions of one already-constituted group, it is more productive

to think of hip hop as an arena where discourses about categories of inequality such as gender, sexuality, race and class, are negotiated and intersect in various ways. This is particularly evident in rap lyrics, which is the focus of the present study. One of the things which distinguishes rap as a genre of popular music is the extent to which social issues are explicitly present in rap lyrics. There is a characteristic engagement with the power relations of society, not least in terms of race, class, gender and sexuality. In rap lyrics in Sweden, there are discursive articulations ranging from sexism to feminism, and from strong critiques of class and racial inequalities to colonial-style stories about the racialized other. In this way, rap lyrics provide a useful case for studying discourses about men and masculinity in their intersection with other power relations.

Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is thus to explore what some of the major developments within contemporary feminist theory can accomplish in relation to men and masculinity, through an analysis of intersecting inequalities in rap lyrics. Theoretically, the main research question is: *How can insights from poststructuralist feminism, feminist phenomenology, intersectionality and queer theory be productively used in relation to men and masculinity research?* These possibilities are explored through the main empirical question: *How are discourses about gender, sexuality, race and class negotiated – i.e. constructed, sustained and challenged – and how do they intersect in rap lyrics?*

Outline of the thesis

The present thesis consists of four articles and this overview chapter. Each of the articles makes use of a theme from Swedish rap lyrics in order to explore how this theme can illuminate the relation between men and masculinity research and some aspect of contemporary feminist theory. The articles can be read independently and in any order, and this overview chapter presents and discusses the common starting points, methodological approach, and synthesizes the empirical and theoretical contributions. Next, I will briefly summarize the constituent articles, and the remainder of this overview chapter is divided into three parts. The first of these describes how the empirical study has been conducted through the use of a poststructuralist and intersectional discourse analysis of rap lyrics. Then, the study is situated in relation to international research on hip hop in a section which relates the discourses about gender, sexuality, race and class found in rap lyrics to what is known about these forms of social inequality in contemporary Swedish society.

Drawing on the empirical study, the final section addresses the theoretical contribution of the thesis, and revolves around the benefits of attending to contemporary feminist theory within men and masculinity research. In particular, it draws together the way poststructuralist feminism, feminist phenomenology, intersectionality and queer theory have been used in the respective articles.

Article summaries

Sticky masculinity

Sticky masculinity: Post-structuralism, phenomenology and subjectivity in critical studies on men (Article I)

How can subjectivity be theorized in relation to masculinity? *Sticky masculinity*, which is the most theoretical article of the thesis, raises this question in relation to discursive articulations in hip hop about men being prone to aggression and violence. It is argued that the established understandings of subjectivity within men and masculinity research – role theory, hegemonic masculinity theory, and discursive psychology – are insufficient in accounting for processes of subject formation. *Sticky masculinity* explores instead the potential benefits of turning to the models of subjectivity developed within poststructuralist feminism and feminist phenomenology. The relative benefits and problems of these traditions are considered through re-readings of the masculinity theorists John Stoltenberg and Victor Seidler. It is argued that the work of these authors offers implicit poststructuralist and phenomenological accounts of masculine subjectivity, although they do not situate their work in such terms. While the poststructuralist tradition offers insights about subjectivity as a contested and incoherent process, feminist phenomenology emphasizes the centrality of bodies inhabiting worlds. Inspired by the work of social and cultural theorist Sara Ahmed, the argument developed in this article attempts to reconcile what is valuable within both traditions. Drawing on Ahmed's ideas of stickiness, the notion of "sticky masculinity" is developed in order to combine insights into lived experience as well as the construction and negotiation of subjectivity.

Degrees of intersectionality

Degrees of intersectionality: Male rap artists in Sweden negotiating class, race and gender (Article II)

How do class, race and gender intersect in rap lyrics, and how can this intersectionality be understood in relation to men and masculinity research? The

empirical analysis in *Degrees of intersectionality* explores how class, race, gender and to some extent sexuality intersect in rap lyrics by male artists. The analysis shows that there are a variety of classed discourses in Swedish hip hop, ranging from critiques of how the working class feels “stuck”, to more privileged positions characterized by feelings of comfort and “flow”. Classed discourses are shown to be related to race to some degree. Race is in turn often articulated in relation to place, and discourses about the stigmatized suburb as an uncivilized “jungle” are both repeated and challenged. The resistance to such racialized imaginary is shown to be connected to normative notions of gender and sexuality, which are both drawn on and played with. Class, race, gender and sexuality thus intersect to varying degrees. Based upon this empirical analysis, *Degrees of intersectionality* contributes to an emerging theoretical discussion on how intersectionality can be used in relation to men and masculinity research. It is argued that an intersectional approach to masculinity calls into question the prevailing idea of “masculinities” in the plural. This notion is criticized for too easily converting differences in class and race positions into different “masculinities”, which under-communicates how gender norms can also be shared across such differences. Moreover, it is argued that a topical focus on men and masculinity also reveals some problems with a dichotomous understanding of interrelatedness that is sometimes found in intersectional scholarship, as represented by the terms “addition” versus “constitution”. Instead of this dichotomy, this article advocates understanding interrelatedness in more fluid terms, through the notion of “degrees of intersectionality”.

No homo

‘No homo’: Straight inoculations and the queering of masculinity in Swedish hip hop (Article III)

How are relations between men negotiated in rap lyrics, and how can such negotiations be understood theoretically? *No homo* explores the boundary-work involved in maintaining the categories of hetero- and homosexuality in Swedish hip hop. The analysis shows that the world-view is to a large extent heteronormative, in the sense of assuming the existence of two discrete genders, as well as a corresponding distinction between sociality and sexuality, while transgressions are policed. The empirical analysis also shows that this outlook is not entirely clear cut, and that there are different forms of ambiguity such as the use of metaphors of same-sex desire. Moreover, there are many articulations of affection for male peers, coupled with fierce disavowals of homosexuality. There are also examples of triangular desire, where men’s desire towards women is mediated in different ways through relations between men. Theoretically, *No homo* argues that a structuralist understand-

ing of gender and sexuality categories, which has been prevailing in men and masculinity research, is insufficient in accounting for these articulations. In contrast, queer theory offers useful theoretical and analytical tools for analyzing how categories of sexuality are accomplished and managed. In particular, the queer theoretical concept of “male homosocial desire” suspends belief in hetero- and homosexuality as stable categories. This opens up possibilities for investigating more complex discursive patterns of desire, where the strength and orientation of desire cannot be known in advance. Incorporating some insights from rhetorical perspectives on discourse analysis, the article develops the notion of “straight inoculations” to denote the expressions through which heterosexual identities are secured and sustained in a contested terrain – such as “no homo”.

Hip hop feminism in Sweden

Hip hop feminism in Sweden: Intersectionality, feminist critique, and female masculinity (Article IV)

How do women negotiate gender norms, in their intersection with race, class and sexuality within the male-dominated hip hop genre? *Hip hop feminism in Sweden* focuses on how these categories are negotiated in rap lyrics by female artists. The analysis shows that articulations of race and class inequalities exist, but that the critique of gender inequalities is a much more prominent theme. The critique of gender inequality is directed towards the hip hop scene, and focuses on male dominance and sexist attitudes faced by female artists. The critique also extends beyond the hip hop context, to society in general, and includes the topics of male dominance in politics, men’s violence against women, as well as sexism within cross-sex relationships. In contrast to a tendency within men and masculinity research to rely on men as a source of data for researching the topics of men and masculinity, *Hip hop feminism in Sweden* analyzes how women both critique and perform masculinity. The queer theoretical notion of “female masculinity” enables analysis of women constructing and performing masculinity. The analysis shows how this includes being a violent female gangster, as well as someone who is constantly trying to “get the girls”. The drawback of the concept of female masculinity is that it could potentially reinforce the binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, even though these gender styles are displaced from sexed bodies. The article argues for careful use of the concept, which is able to attend also to queer/trans articulations about not only the freedom to embody either of two genders, but also the freedom from precisely these two genders, masculinity and femininity.

Reading rap lyrics

I will now turn to the methodological approach which has governed my empirical study of rap lyrics in Sweden. To get a snapshot, consider the song “Telephone terror” (*Telefonterror*) which appeared on rap artist Ayo’s 1999 CD. The song depicts how “Ayo” in the song is “terrorized” by a series of phone calls. In the first verse, Ayo receives a call from the enforcement authorities about collecting a 10,000 SEK debt. He asks them to have some mercy for a poor father who is struggling to support his two children, but nevertheless complies with the demand to pay his debt. In the second verse, another man calls. This time it is a self-proclaimed racist who “hates niggers” and urges Ayo to “go back home”. In reply, the racist is asked to come to the “hood” in order to “show what you got”. Next, a woman calls. She has seen Ayo on TV, has wangled his phone number from one of his friends, and is now eager to meet him in real life; however Ayo declines, being stressed and busy. Another call comes from Hassan, an acquaintance who invites Ayo to take part in a robbery using a Kalashnikov gun. Again, Ayo declines, replying that he has quit such business.

This song illustrates how intersectional inequalities figure as prominent themes in rap lyrics in Sweden. Each of the four phone calls summarized here can be seen to concern one set of power relations: class, race, sexuality and gender, respectively. Moreover, they are not independent but rather intersect with each other. In the proximity to violence and criminality, race and class positions are linked to masculinity, and this is also the case in being heterosexually desirable. In this way, the song illustrates both the polyphony of the data, where many categories of inequality can appear within one song, but also the poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis employed in this study. One could say that, in “Telephone terror”, subjects are positioned by multiple and rival discourses through interpellation, and that these positions and discourses are not clear cut and consistent but rather subject to constant negotiations. From the perspective of the present thesis, what is interesting about this song is not what is or is not “true” about it, but instead the discursive patterns about gender, sexuality, race and class that are enacted, constructed and negotiated in this song and in many others. I will now present how the data in this study were selected, and then discuss the process of analysis, as well as offer some evaluative reflections.

Delimiting rap lyrics in Sweden

This study of hip hop has been guided by a *poststructuralist* and *intersectional* approach (which is elaborated in the last section of this overview chapter). Methodologically, this means that, following Michel Foucault, I have been interested in tracking discourses across a discursive field, rather than being overly concerned with the immediate context in which discursive statements are articulated (Foucault 1969/2002). The intersectional ambition has focused my attention on the topics of gender, sexuality, race and class.

Why these four categories of inequality? Within intersectional research, it is recognized that several dimensions of inequality operate across various social domains, and affect one another to some degree. This leads to the dilemma that on the one hand, one cannot exclude some of these dimensions without partially ending up with the very reductionism that intersectionality is meant to challenge (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005, 99). On the other hand, no single study is likely to cover “everything” equally well (Butler 1993, 18pp). Therefore, there are always choices and priorities involved, which need to be accounted for (Lykke 2003, 53). One wants to argue that these choices are not made randomly but reflect significance, in either the world or one’s data (Yuval-Davis 2006, 203). At the same time, such assessments are not independent of researchers’ interests, knowledge or attachments (Irni 2010, 119). For instance, a disability studies scholar, a queer studies scholar and a postcolonial studies scholar might focus on different themes even in the same material (if they were not the same person). When I began writing about hip hop from intersectional perspectives, I wanted to write about race, class, gender, sexuality, age and dis/ability. All seemed to be present in rap lyrics and were hard to prioritize or exclude as they do not appear in isolation from each other. Also, some of the common ways of delimiting intersectional analysis to either the gender, race and class triad, or to gender plus any other category seemed slightly arbitrary. While I still think it is crucial not to restrict one’s attention too much too early in the research process, including all the “big six” categories in this thesis proved impossible. I have omitted age and dis/ability since I have considered gender, sexuality, race and class to be more prominent themes in Swedish rap lyrics.⁵ This is of course a limitation, both in terms of the categories excluded, but also in relation to those included, since they are only analyzed when they do not explicitly intersect with age and dis/ability. While these are limitations of the present study, they also provide an opportunity for future work.

The analytic focus is thus on how the themes of gender, sexuality, race and class are talked about and performed in rap lyrics, and not on relating them to specific songs and performances, or to what is known about any

⁵ For intersectional work on age, see Krekula, Närvänen, and Näsman 2005; Calasanti and Slevin 2006; Ambjörnsson and Jönsson 2010; and on disability, see Garland-Thompson 2005; McRuer 2006; Grönvik and Söder 2008.

particular artist. For these reasons, I did not want to focus on only a few important artists, or include every rap artist who has ever released a song on the internet. I have opted for an in-between strategy, and have strategically selected 38 artists whose lyrics constitute a rich and diverse sample with regard to gender, sexuality, race and class. My reasoning has been as follows.

Hip hop in Sweden began as a subcultural activity in the 1980s, and in this period rap was usually in English. Following a European pattern, the turn to local languages, in this case Swedish, took place in the early 1990s and entailed a breakthrough in terms of gaining a wider public. The first wave of hip hop to reach radio listeners included the pioneers of this period, Just D and The Latin Kings. In the years around the turn of the millennium, there was another wave, where a number of well-known artists such as Feven, Ken, LoopTroop, Melinda Wrede, Petter and Timbuktu established themselves on the Swedish hip hop scene. From about 2007 onwards, one can talk about yet another wave which has seen a number of new artists gaining recognition, and through which hip hop in Sweden has become increasingly diversified.⁶

I started listening to and analyzing rap from the first two waves, i.e. 1991-2007, noting where themes relating to my research questions were prominent. Starting from early artists whose lyrics contain a lot of statements about race, class, gender and sexuality, I have moved forward through the years by survey-listening to a wide range of Swedish hip hop. In choosing which artists to include in my sample, I have been guided by three principles. First, in order to delimit the potential range of material, I chose initially to include only artists who have released at least one CD. Second, to avoid an esoteric sample, I made sure to include all major artists such as Petter, Timbuktu, Ken, LoopTroop, etc. Third, to get a diverse sample, I have also included artists whose lyrics differ from dominant discourses, such as the song “Flyter” by Mange Schmidt, Wille Crafoord and Sofia Talvik, analyzed in *Degrees of intersectionality*. In this way, I have constructed a sample that includes a rich variety of artists and discourses. There is an emphasis on the first two periods of hip hop in Sweden, with which I began my analysis. Artists from the period 2007-2011 have been included only to the extent that this has been thematically motivated. In particular, this extension relates to female artists, as analyzed in *Hip hop feminism*, where I decided – due to the

⁶ I do not undertake any analysis of genre boundaries in this thesis, but this is a subject that could be worthy of further investigation. A genre is on the one hand “a relatively stable set of conventions” (Fairclough 1992, 126); on the other hand “genres are defined in flux and are subject to constant revision and refinement in the face of the continuing stream of fresh recordings” (Pennay 2001, 112). Ann Werner argues that the boundary between hip hop and R’n’B is a gendered one, and that hip hop is constructed as more masculine (Werner 2009, 33).

overwhelming male dominance – to include some artists who had not released a CD of their own.

My sample thus includes the following 38 artists, of which 29 (*) appear in the articles: Adam Tensta*, Advance Patrol*, Afasi & Filthy, Alexis Weak*, Ayesha*, Ayo*, Blues*, Cleo*, Crafoord, Schmidt & Talvik*, D Muttant & Y Puss*, Fattaru*, Femtastic*, Feven*, Fjärde världen*, Heli*, Infinite Mass*, Ison & Fille*, Just D*, Kartellen, Ken*, Labyrint, Lilla Nammo*, LoopTroop*, Maskinen, Max Peezay, Mobbade barn med automatvapen*, Melinda Wrede*, Nabila*, Paragon, Peshi*, Petter*, Promoe, Remedeh*, Silversystrar*, Snook, Svenska akademien, The Latin Kings*, and Timbuktu*. I have included all CD:s by these artists under the period covered (with only a few exceptions due to unavailability) – in total 101 records listed in the discography. I will now describe how the analysis of this material has been conducted.

Tracking discourses

We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset [...] And instead of according to them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept, in the name of methodological rigour, that, in the first instance, they concern only a population of dispersed events. (Foucault 1969/2002, 22)

In *The archaeology of knowledge* Michel Foucault develops his methodological principles (Foucault 1969/2002). Instead of starting from the conventional units of analysis such as ‘author’ or ‘work’, he proposes focusing on discursive statements in order to identify and “describe other unities, but this time by means of a group of controlled decisions” (Foucault 1969/2002, 29). In this spirit, the basic question I have asked of the material is: *What in this record, in this song, in this verse or in this line, is about race, class, gender or sexuality?* In this way, I have been able to examine the characteristic polyphony of rap lyrics. While there are instances of songs being rather coherent, I have often found that multiple themes occur in a more chaotic fashion. Rappers take turns in a song, focus on different things in different parts of a song, or make use of gendered expressions in describing racial inequalities, as described in *Degrees of intersectionality*.

One important limitation of this kind of Foucauldian discourse analysis is that in foregrounding themes prevalent across a discursive field, it loses some of the immediate context. In this case, this includes the performance and musical dimensions (Frith 1996; Krims 2000). While I acknowledge the value of conducting more detailed analysis of specific songs, which would include such aspects, focusing strictly on rap lyrics has enabled me to track

discourses across a larger body of material than would have been possible otherwise. In international hip hop research, focusing on rap lyrics is also quite common, although often from sociolinguistic perspectives (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009; Terkourafi 2010). Similarly, the relation between artist and lyrics is not in focus in my analysis. I have not been concerned with speculating on the intentions behind a song or measuring the accuracy of descriptions. There are of course interesting analyses which combine different forms of data, such as rap lyrics and interviews with artists (Rose 1994; Pough 2004). My research interest, however, lies not so much in understanding what particular artists are trying to communicate through their lyrics, but rather in analyzing the discursive patterns that occur in rap lyrics regardless of how these are talked about in interviews or other contexts. While there is a lot of creativity going into the writing of rap lyrics, it is also the case that we express ourselves in a language which, as Judith Butler points out, both precedes and exceeds us. Accordingly, rap lyrics can also be seen as a web of discourse which more or less constitutes “a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our ‘singular’ stories are told” (Butler 2005, 21). Although considered in this way, rap lyrics may not tell us the truth about any particular rap artist, they still “speak volumes” about current discourses about gender, sexuality, race and class.

The thematic analysis of rap lyrics I have thus undertaken has identified a number of articulations of race, gender, class and sexuality. I have transcribed parts of these extracts myself, but have also benefitted from existing transcriptions available in album covers, or on the internet, particularly but not exclusively on the site HipHopTexter (HipHopTexter 2014). Since these have not always been completely reliable, I have always double-checked the transcriptions that were not originally mine. While extracts from lyrics are presented in English in the articles, all analysis has been done on the original transcriptions in order to avoid translations impacting on the analysis. In thematically coding statements as being “about” gender, sexuality, race and class, I have considered the many explicit statements about them, but also articulations which are more implicitly related. The latter interpretations are based on a combination of detailed text analysis and what is known from previous research on gender, sexuality, race and class. For instance, I have interpreted talk about violence as related to cultural constructions of masculinity, and talk about the “hood” as related to racialized space (Hearn 1998; Forman 2002).

This broad thematic coding has been supplemented by a more detailed analysis of selected extracts.⁷ Here, I have followed Judith Baxter, who argues that a Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) can make productive use of analytical tools developed within other branches of discourse analysis:

⁷ This approach is also recommended by Norman Fairclough (Fairclough 1992, 230).

One of the key values of FPDA is that it offers itself as a ‘supplementary’ approach, simultaneously complementing and undermining other methods. There is much value to be gained from a *multi-perspectival* approach that combines different methodological tools in a functional way as befits the task at hand (Baxter 2008, 244 original emphasis)

Thus, while Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discursive Psychology (DP) have different takes on power and context, some of the analytical tools developed within these approaches are still very useful for a poststructuralist discourse analysis. I have made use of the focus on linguistic aspects foregrounded in CDA (Fairclough 1992). This has enabled me to focus on how metaphors are used to convey meaning, such as when suburbs in Sweden are described as a “jungle”, which is analyzed in *Degrees of intersectionality*. From DP, I have made use of some insights about the rhetorical aspects of discourse (Potter 1996). These were helpful in analyzing the rhetorical function of male rappers’ use of expressions such as “no homo”. The way I combine these tools is most evidently visible in *No homo*, which in part is structured around these aspects. Similarly, I make use of concepts from Sara Ahmed’s poststructuralist reading of phenomenology in the empirical analyses in *Degrees of intersectionality* and *Hip hop feminism in Sweden*.

An interesting question in interpreting discourse is how play and irony can be analyzed. Clearly, rap lyrics are not always solemn, but more often playful, and both repeat and mock dominant discourses. Within discourse analysis, irony can be understood as *intertextual* in the sense that it echoes another statement while somehow conveying that it is not the producer’s meaning (Fairclough 1992, 123). Hence, ironic statements are often recognizable by the cues which construct them as ironic. In Heli’s gangster story analyzed in *Hip hop feminism in Sweden*, for instance, the line “she’s lying” from the chorus indicates that listeners are to understand the song as parody. However, the fact that some statements are signaled as ironic does not make them less interesting. After all, the discourse analyst is not interested in finding an author’s “true” meaning. The ironic cues do not cancel out the statements to which they are coupled, and these combinations can usefully be analyzed in order to see where irony is used and what this use accomplishes, what it calls into question, but also what stories it permits. Sometimes irony is used without characteristic cues, relying instead on interpreters being able to recognize anyway “a blatant mismatch between apparent meaning and situational context” (Fairclough 1992, 123). Since such occasions rely more heavily on interpreters’ consent, they are inherently trickier to analyze, and interpreters may well disagree upon the extent to which a statement can be considered ironic. On some occasions I have considered statements as obviously ironic and playful, such as when Advance Patrol mock racist stereotypes by stating that they come to Sweden in order to steal the girls, analyzed in *Degrees of intersectionality*. In general, however, I have refrained from

speculating on whether a discourse can be considered ironic where I have not detected ironic cues. Regardless of what may have been intended or not, the discourse is still “out there”.

So far, I have described the process of analysis quite neatly as a two-step procedure of broad coding and close reading. However, qualitative and interpretative analysis is rarely so linear. In practice, I have been back and forth several times between broad survey-listening and detailed analysis of selected extracts – where the one has often inspired the other – until I felt reasonably satisfied with the analytic stories I was constructing, in terms of capturing both a sense of the dominant discourses and some of the variation expressed.

Evaluative reflections

How can we assess and evaluate the quality of qualitative research? Answers to this question range from referring to the traditional concepts of validity and reliability to employing more diversified lists of criteria. Stephanie Taylor, for instance, discusses the eligibility of twenty different criteria in relation to discourse analysis (Taylor 2001). I will focus here on four aspects which cover most of this discussion, and according to which a good analysis should be *relevant, analytic, transparent and systematic*.

An analysis needs to be *relevant* to some theoretical or ‘real-world’ problem; my analysis of rap lyrics is relevant both in terms of increasing knowledge about the cultural phenomenon of hip hop, and in terms of theoretical debates within men and masculinity research. An analysis should also be *analytic*, which means not letting data speak for itself, but rather being clear about how they are interpreted and related to the research questions, which is something I have tried to be explicit about in the articles. These two criteria converge in what Mats Alvesson & Kaj Sköldbörg call “richness in points”: that an analysis should contribute to questioning and problematizing established frames of thinking (Alvesson and Sköldbörg 2009, 305pp). In line with this idea, I have put an emphasis on articulating how my empirical analyses of rap lyrics can contribute to challenging some dominant assumptions within men and masculinity research. For reasons of *transparency* I have tried to include a variety of quotes from the songs in the articles. In choosing what parts of the data to include in the limited space that journal articles allow for, I have selected extracts that on the one hand articulate different positions and that on the other hand are clear and effective enough for making visible the points of argument.

Furthermore, analysis should be *systematic*, which includes considering detail and diversity. I have described the thematic analysis above, and in the articles I have striven to make visible both dominant themes and diverging articulations. For instance, in *Degrees of intersectionality* I analyze both

anti-racist discourses about the “hood”, but also the song “Tre gringos” which has an opposite message. In organizing the articles I experienced a tension between the need to develop a structured argument and the intersectional ambition of retaining complexity. There were many possible ways that I could have organized the empirical data. Particularly in *Degrees of intersectionality*, my wish to demonstrate the complex intersections of class, race, gender, and to some extent sexuality, meant that I had to leave out a number of things that could have merited more attention. The analysis of race and class could thus have been more extended, but that would on the other hand have been at the expense of gender or sexuality, and I decided to prioritize demonstrating the complexity of their intersections. In the thesis as a whole, some empirical themes such as violence, fatherhood and men’s less normative gender articulations have been omitted. Unfortunately, there was not space to develop these themes within this thesis, but they could be addressed in future work.

A further important but difficult question is that of the role of the researcher. In Donna Haraway’s terms, research is neither strictly objective nor totally relative, but is always *situated* (Haraway 2004). It is thus important to be self-reflective about the role of the researcher – *the I* – who has been present in the whole process of choosing perspectives, data, themes, examples and analysis. Many good self-reflexive accounts focus on researcher-participant interactions in interviews or fieldwork (e.g. Egeberg Holmgren 2011a; Pascoe 2007, 175–193). However, even though rap lyrics are not interactively obtained nor written as a response to a researcher’s interrogations, there are many other parts of the research process where the researcher makes an impact. Two things are of particular importance. First, the proximity to the object of study, and the pros and cons of insiders and outsiders which have long been discussed within the sociology of science and cultural sociology (e.g. Merton 1972; Hannerz 2013, 73–87). In my case, I would say that I am somewhat in-between, having been a regular listener to Swedish hip hop during the period covered in this thesis, but not a subcultural participant. I thus have a familiarity with the genre which to a certain extent has facilitated interpretation, but I do not write with any specific commitment to promoting hip hop culture. Second, the impact of the intersectional social positions of the researcher, and the related risks and responsibilities have been discussed within feminist and postcolonial research (e.g. Harding 2004). I inhabit categories such as “white” and “man”, and the amount of privilege this means in a world of intersecting inequalities implies a certain risk of not paying sufficient attention to issues concerning gender, sexuality, race and class (e.g. Spivak 1981; Mohanty 1988; Harding 1998) – but also a responsibility for doing so (Lorde 1984; Bailey 2000; Young 2011). On the other hand, there is no automatic relation between social position, perspectives and analysis, and there is always a risk that the

choice of critical perspectives may become “non-performative” and that analysis will fail to deliver what it promises (Ahmed 2004a).

The idea of writing about hip hop came to me when I developed an interest in researching masculinity, something I regard with what Sara Ahmed has called the feminist emotions of *anger, wonder and hope*: anger about the status quo, wonder about how things have come to be as they are, and hope for change (Ahmed 2004b, 168–189). Some rap lyrics that I recalled made me realize that hip hop would be an interesting case for an intersectional feminist analysis of masculinity. The fact that the point of entry is a white man who comes to think of hip hop as an interesting case for the study of masculinity, after having listened disproportionately to white male artists – such as Just D, LoopTroop, Mobbade barn med automatvapen and Svenska akademien – was not insignificant in shaping the emphasis of the study. If I had belonged to some other group, such as women and/or a racialized working class, the analytical focus may have been elsewhere, and this could have affected the organization of the articles, choice of examples and analysis, as well as choice of methods and material. For instance, in his foreword to the book edition of the collected rap lyrics of the pioneering group The Latin Kings, poet and novelist Johannes Anyuru writes about their significance not only as poets but also in creating a sense of belonging for non-white youth: “Everything is different: We are permitted to live here.” (Anyuru 2004, 10 my translation)

If I had had similar experiences of hip hop, my main entry point in writing about hip hop could well have been racism, and perhaps I would have focused on situating my analysis more in relation to research on black men’s structural disadvantages and complex negotiations of cultural stereotypes (e.g. Mercer 1994; hooks 2003; White 2011). While any single study has its limitations, it is perhaps more of a collective problem that a majority of those who have published scholarly texts about hip hop in Sweden so far have been white and men. This would be unthinkable in relation to hip hop studies in the US, but reflects the white dominance in Swedish universities (de los Reyes 2007; Uppsala universitet 2012). Similarly, the drafts I have presented at various academic seminars have also benefited to a larger extent from comments by white women and feminists than from non-white academics, which may also be of significance. In terms of sexuality, it has been argued that hetero- and homosexuality has a shared investment in seeing such categories as stable and mutually exclusive (Hemmings 2002; Yoshino 2000). My bi-identification could thus have been helpful in considering hetero- and homosexuality as unstable and accomplished categories.⁸

⁸ For an illustrative account of how sexual identities can restrict what we are willing to see, see Ken Corbett’s discussion of heterosexual fathers’ responses to their feminine sons (Corbett 2009:120-142).

However, while it is important to reflect upon the intersectional conditions of research production, I have attempted to analyze discursive articulations in similar ways, regardless of whether I would be considered to belong to a particular category or not. In the end, the analyses offered in the thesis should be considered as a contribution to knowledge about hip hop in Sweden, but not as the definitive or final story.

Contextualizing hip hop

After this account of how the empirical study has been conducted, it is now time to pay attention to contextual aspects. This is a matter of situating the study in relation to previous research on hip hop, but also of relating the discursive negotiations in rap lyrics to what is known about contemporary forms of inequality in Sweden.

There is an increasing amount of research on hip hop culture throughout the world: in the US (Forman and Neal 2012); in Africa (Saucier 2011; Charry 2012); in Japan (Condry 2006); in Colombia (Dennis 2012); in Europe (Nitzsche and Grünzweig 2013); in Scandinavia (Krogh and Stougaard Pedersen 2008). There is research focused on how hip hop has developed in different locations across the world (Mitchell 2001b; Basu and Lemelle 2006); on linguistic aspects (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009; Terkourafi 2010); and on pedagogical possibilities for empowering oppressed groups (Porfilio and Viola 2012). The present study draws on, and contributes to this varied body of research by combining discourse analysis of rap lyrics, with a thematic focus on gender, sexuality, race and class, in the context of Sweden. Rap lyrics can be studied as an integrated part of hip hop music (Krimms 2000; Jarman-Ivens 2006). They can also be analyzed in their own right. Analyses of poetics and linguistics show that rap lyrics are often remarkably complex, as H. Samy Alim writes:

Hip Hop artists not only use the conventional poetic constructions (feminine [sic!] rhyme, masculine [sic!] rhyme, end rhyme, etc.), but they travel far beyond that, using innovative rhyming techniques such as *chain rhymes*, *back-to-back chain rhymes*, *compound internal rhymes*, *primary and secondary internal rhymes*, polysyllabic rhyme strings of *octuple rhymes*, and creating a *multirhyme matrix* that is unparalleled in American poetics. (Alim 2006, 17 original emphasis)

Sociolinguistic researchers have documented the creativity involved in ‘code-switching’ among different languages within rap (e.g. Sarkar and Winer 2006). While rap lyrics are frequently used as data in this way in international hip hop research, a thematic focus on the dynamics of gender, sexuality, race and class is rare outside the US. The biggest international anthologies of hip hop scholarship include in total about 90 chapters analyzing various aspects of hip hop in a range of national contexts – but remarkably little is said about gender relations and their intersections with other

power dimensions (Mitchell 2001b; Basu and Lemelle 2006; Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009; Terkourafi 2010; Nietzsche and Grünzweig 2013). In the US context, in contrast, these topics are the focus of a number of studies informed by black feminism. These include Tricia Rose's pioneering study which explores hip hop culture with sensitivity to both race and gender (Rose 1994). Gwendolyn Pough's work analyzes "the ways Black women of the Hip-Hop generation intervene in the public sphere and the ways they bring wreck to it" (Pough 2004, 77). While both these studies draw on different kinds of data, such as lyrics, videos and interviews, the present study is more in tune with Imani Perry's analysis of the poetics and politics of *rap lyrics* (Perry 2004). More recent work on "hip hop feminism" continues to explore various questions about gender, race and sexuality (Pough et al. 2007; Hobson and Bartlow 2008; Durham 2013). Masculinity has been in focus for some studies: on how black men talk about their relationship with hip hop (Greene 2008; Jeffries 2011); on the connections between masculinity, hip hop and blackness (Cheney 2005; White 2011; Belle 2014; Shabazz 2014;); on hip hop love songs (Hardy 2010); and on sexist language (Weitzer and Kubrin 2009). Whereas rap lyrics are thus commonly used as data in international hip hop research, and intersectional perspectives are used in the US context, the present study draws on both bodies of research, and contributes by combining the two in the context of Sweden.

The study of hip hop in Sweden is an emerging enterprise, including researchers from different disciplines. Music-making was in focus for Johan Söderman's thesis in music education, which explores, through interviews with artists, some of the informal learning processes involved in creating hip hop music (Söderman 2007). The understanding of music-making processes in hip hop is developed further in a forthcoming thesis by ethnologist Andrea Dankić (Dankić forthcoming). Ove Sernhede's ethnographic work explores the significance of hip hop among young men in a stigmatized suburb, and he argues that hip hop can be seen as a form of street-style postcolonial critique (Sernhede 2007). In joint publications, Sernhede and Söderman point to the parallels between hip hop and the Swedish tradition of popular education (*folkbildning*) (Sernhede and Söderman 2010; 2012). The potential of rap artists to act as "public pedagogues" in questioning issues of racism and belonging is also emphasized in Alexandra D'Urso's comparative case study of Swedish rap artist Adam Tensta and a French *rai* artist, in which lyrics represent one of several forms of data (D'Urso 2013). Art historian Jacob Kimvall traces the development of graffiti in New York and Berlin as well as in Stockholm, with its controversial "zero tolerance" policy against this art form (Kimvall 2012; forthcoming). Transnational aspects are explored further in historian Susan Lindholm's forthcoming thesis on hip hop "in-between" Sweden and Chile, also drawing on different forms of data (S. Lindholm forthcoming). Lennart Nyberg has analyzed some aspects of how hip hop is narrated in lyrics, with a focus on how norms differ between the

public sphere and the hip hop subculture (Nyberg 2008). The ongoing work of islamologist Anders Ackfeldt discerns Islamic themes among some Swedish rappers (Ackfeldt 2012; forthcoming). Research on hip hop in Sweden is thus heterogeneous, both in terms of disciplinary belonging, thematic focus, and the kinds of data it uses. The present study contributes to this body of research by thematically analyzing a relatively large sample of rap lyrics. This approach enables recognition of some of the larger discursive patterns in hip hop in Sweden, which complements more detailed analysis of specific artists (Dankić 2013; D’Urso 2013).

Furthermore, my analysis contributes by focusing on gender and its intersections with other power dimensions. Studies of gender and popular music in Sweden encompass genres such as rock and Electronic Dance Music (Ganetz 1997; Gavanas 2009; Ganetz et al. 2009). In relation to hip hop, Sernhede has briefly discussed issues of masculinity from a psychoanalytically informed perspective (Sernhede 2007, 176–211). Anna Bredström and Magnus Dahlstedt present a more detailed account in an essay which analyzes media reception of Swedish hip hop and some early lyrics (Bredström and Dahlstedt 2002). They point to several interesting aspects, such as recurring racialized and gendered stereotyping in the media, which assumes the problematic nature of non-white male artists. While my study shares with Bredström and Dahlstedt a focus on gender in relation to other power dimensions, my approach differs from their “materialist” approach to cultural studies. There seems to be an unfortunate assumption in that approach which privileges class/capitalism over race and gender. Accordingly, LoopTroop’s white male critique of capitalism is read as radical – unlike the black feminist critique offered by Feven.⁹ In contrast, by taking a poststructuralist and intersectional approach I am able to examine how categories of inequality are constructed, negotiated and intersecting in discourse, rather than assuming that one is more fundamental or political than the other.

Class

The intersectional approach in this study focuses on gender, sexuality, race and class as four of the major systems of inequality, and the poststructuralist perspective conceives these to be historical and discursive constructions. In other words, the categories of gender, sexuality, race and class are not stable and given, but contested social constructions. Although these categories do not exist other than as socially constructed and enforced categories, their *effects* in terms of power are very real. As Michel Foucault puts it:

⁹ My analysis of these artists is presented in *Degrees of intersectionality and Hip hop feminism in Sweden*.

And “Power,” insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them [...] it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault 1976/1990, 93)

In this case, “the complex strategical situation in a particular society” is about configurations of inequality in contemporary Sweden. Regarding gender, sexuality, race and class, these are different processes, but they often share what Iris Marion Young calls “faces of oppression”, such as exploitation, cultural dominance and violence (Young 1990). They are thus neither completely similar nor totally different, but vary with the context in which they appear.¹⁰ Sweden, along with other Nordic countries, has a reputation for social equality. This is in large part due to the radical reformism of the social democracy during the 20th century, including the continual development of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990). Income inequalities, for instance, decreased steadily in the economically successful 1950-1980 period, but since then have started to increase again under the impact of neoliberal policies (Bergström and Eld 2014; Boréus 1997). In international comparison, Sweden has a relatively low degree of class inequality – but class differences have nevertheless proven to be fairly consistent (Oskarson, Bengtsson, and Berglund 2010, 227).

Since Karl Marx and Max Weber, sociologists have traditionally explored class inequality as an aspect of economic arrangements (e.g. Acker 2006). From a poststructuralist perspective, capitalist exploitative relations and forms of organization co-exist with other forms of governance and organization of economic activity, all of which are contested and modified in uncertain hegemonic struggles (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001; Gibson-Graham 1996; Martinsson 2006). Contemporary quantitative studies have used the ESEC classification, which demonstrates that it is meaningful to distinguish between up to 10 different class positions in working life (Bengtsson 2010). The class positions in this classification entail different degrees of influence, autonomy and authority, as well as career opportunities in work (Berglund 2010). Differences in class positions unsurprisingly correlate with income (Schedin 2010); with level of education (Öhlin 2010); and with overall life satisfaction (Brülde and Nilsson 2010). Class processes, however, cannot be reduced to a separate economic sphere but involve our cultural habits and taste in the widest sense (Bourdieu 1984; Skeggs 1997; Devine et al. 2005).

¹⁰ Attempts to define once and for all the different logics of these forms of inequality have proven hard to sustain; see Judith Butler’s critique of Nancy Fraser’s redistribution-recognition model (Fraser 1995; Butler 1998). For instance, the Marxist desire that class be different from everything else tends to exaggerate the distinctiveness of class compared to the ‘other categories’ which are in turn homogenized, obscuring differences between them. Iris Marion Young’s model of “faces of oppression” is more helpful, since it recognizes both possible similarities and contextual differences (Young 1990).

Quantitative research in Sweden thus documents correlations between class position (in the above sense) and lifestyle matters such as patterns of alcohol consumption (Weibull, Fahlke, and Nilsson 2010); interest in and taste regarding culture (Nilsson and Peurell 2010); how we access news (Sternvik and Wadbring 2010); and our political and ideological world-view (Berglund and Oskarson 2010). In short, while the hierarchical organization of economic life plays an important part in the construction and maintenance of class relations, the latter involve many other aspects of lived experience which are both affected by economic arrangements and affect them through our *orientations* towards certain things more than others. These processes are documented in qualitative research, which shows, for instance, how children experience living in relative poverty (Fernqvist 2013); and how “class travelers” have struggled to leave the structural conditions of the working class but often become uncomfortable in middle class culture (Sohl 2014).

In the last two decades in Sweden, hip hop has been an arena where class inequalities have been explicitly dealt with. In this respect, there are parallels with other music genres such as punk. The analysis in *Degrees of intersectionality* shows how there is a variation in classed discourses in Swedish rap, ranging from descriptions of being stuck in the working class with low-income jobs, to more privileged outlooks describing the experience of “flow”. This article shows some articulations of class in the data, but there are many more occasions where various experiences of being poor are presented, such as having to rely on welfare benefits, as well as a proximity to violence and criminality. By talking about such experiences in popular culture, rap artists contribute to putting issues of class inequality on the political agenda.

Race

The analysis in *Degrees of intersectionality* shows that class has much to do with race. Among other things, the “flow” discourse connects privileged positions of class and race, while lower class positions are related to not being white. The concepts of race and racialization have been controversial in contemporary Europe, including in Sweden. A commonly held view is that, in the words of Fatima El-Tayeb: “Race, at times, seems to exist anywhere but in Europe” (El-Tayeb 2011, xvii). This view, however, is to a large extent based on wishful thinking, since modern thought regarding race was spread over large parts of the world through European colonialism. Later, the colonial methods were practiced within Europe as well in the form of Nazism, drawing on “scientific” theories of race biology (e.g. Motturi 2007, 11–15). Sweden is part of this European colonial history: Sweden ruled the colony of Saint-Barthélemy for almost a century; Carl Linnaeus was the first to scientifically categorize human races, with the white race on top and the

black race as inferior; the Swedish Institute for Racial Biology in Uppsala (1922-1958) influenced the European development of “scientific” racism and eugenics (e.g. Palmberg 2009).

Postcolonial theory has observed that we are not over our colonial history. Colonial patterns are still contemporary; the analysis of the song “Tre gringos” in *Degrees of intersectionality* shows a discourse where a stigmatized suburb is described through colonial imagery. There is a strong connection between the racial idea of whiteness, and ideas about various European nations. Throughout Europe, people who are not read as “white” are often constructed as immigrants, regardless of their citizenship status, place of birth, or experiences of migration. Thus, in Sweden, the prevalent binary opposition between ‘Swede’ and ‘immigrant’ is often in effect a question of whether or not one passes as white. The social construction of race thus matters. According to a useful compilation of recent statistics, Sweden is one of the worst EU countries in terms of the number of foreign-born people who are poor, despite this group being comparatively well-educated. Moreover, Sweden’s three big city regions are, in comparative terms, extremely segregated (Hübinette et al. 2012, 17–20). There is every reason to believe that this is a question of race, and not primarily one of migration; white people are rarely seen as migrants (Lundström 2014). While class and race intersect to varying degrees, they cannot be reduced to one another. That would disregard the variation within both categories, as well as the experiences of race that are shared across class positions (and vice versa). Structural discrimination exists not only in working life but also in relation other spheres such as education, media and health (Kamali 2006). National minorities, such as the Roma have long been discriminated (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2014); and a recent report on Afrophobia also shows that Afro-Swedes are the Swedish minority most exposed to hate crime (Hübinette, Kawesa, and Beshir 2014). Despite these documented patterns of racial inequality, there is widespread belief in “Swedish exceptionalism” from race and racism which partially obstructs public recognition of these issues (Habel 2012).

There is much critique of ethnic and racial inequalities in hip hop. This applies not only to the US, where hip hop is often referred to as black music/culture, but across the world. The term “connective marginalities” aptly catches this capacity (Osumare 1997). In her comparative study of the cultural production of what she calls *European Others*, Fatima El-Tayeb describes the significance of hip hop for non-white Europeans:

This discovery of a ‘common language’ across communities and borders often amounted to an epiphany for young artists who began to use hip-hop as a tool to analyze and name their positionality as minoritarian Europeans within a continental system that continued to define them as foreigners. It was the appropriation of this U.S. born afro-diasporic art form that first allowed Europeans of color to create a language in which to define themselves as belonging to Europe. (El-Tayeb 2011, xli)

Similarly, Sernhede's ethnographic work in Sweden foregrounds the capacity of hip hop artists to act as street-style postcolonial organic intellectuals (Sernhede 2007). The present thesis confirms this picture to a certain extent, and the analysis presented in *Degrees of intersectionality* shows how counterhegemonic articulations about racialized place are prominent in rap lyrics in Sweden. However, in keeping with the idea of seeing hip hop as an arena where different discourses are played out, this analysis avoids describing hip hop as an anti-racist totality. There are indeed examples analyzed in the article that could not be interpreted as anti-racist even with the best of intentions. That said, anti-racist articulations do constitute a major theme in my data, from The Latin Kings in the 1990s to Adam Tensta today, to name just two out of many artists in whose lyrics such discourses figure. These articulations have several different aspects, ranging from a critique of various current political events, including but not restricted to the rise of the racist political party the Sweden Democrats, to racialized structural processes in the labor and housing markets. My analysis foregrounds the challenging of hegemonic discourses of racialized place. Such discourses construct racialized suburbs in colonial terms as outside of white Swedish civilization (Molina 1997; 2005). Qualitative research has shown that there is a pressure to leave the suburb behind in order to become successful and assimilate into a white middle-class (Lundström 2007; Sohl 2014). In the rap lyrics I have analyzed, the problems of stigmatized areas are not concealed: there are stories about poverty, criminality and violence, of society's lack of concern for the inhabitants of these areas, and of racism within the police. Still, the territorial belonging is not disavowed but rather embraced and taken pride in. In this way, hip hop has provided a set of anti-racist articulations.

Gender

While class and race intersect in the material, it is also important to acknowledge that none of these categories of inequality are independent of gender. Again, the analysis in *Degrees of intersectionality* demonstrates that the resistance towards class and race inequalities often draws on gendered experiences and invokes normative notions of gender. While Sweden is often placed among the top countries in international rankings of gender equality, this should not obscure the prevailing significance of gender inequalities across various social domains. These include income differences, where women earn about 80 percent of men's income on an aggregate level (SCB 2014). Comparatively speaking, Sweden has a relatively large proportion of women in the work force, but simultaneously one of the most horizontally segregated labor markets in the world, where women are disproportionately found in the caring professions (SCB 2014, 62pp). The Swedish welfare state offers 240 days of paid parental leave per parent, yet many men still

transfer most of their share to women, and in total men lay claim to less than 25% of paid days of parental leave (Försäkringskassan 2011). Men still spend about half as much time as women on unpaid housework (Boye and Evertsson 2014). In terms of political representation, the parliament is relatively gender-equal but Sweden's prime ministers have without exception all been men. Furthermore, men are heavily over-represented as perpetrators of interpersonal violence, especially regarding sexual offences, where men constitute 98% of the suspects, but where only 7% are convicted (Brå 2014). Qualitative research suggests that on closer inspection, even cross-sex relationships which are understood to be gender equal, are in fact not (Holmberg 1999). In many areas, men constitute an unmarked norm, which can be seen in expressions such as "football" and "women's football", but also in male-dominated reading lists in the university system.

Hip hop in Sweden is no exception here, and the genre has long been dominated by male artists. The analysis in *Hip hop feminism in Sweden* thus shows that gender inequalities have been a central focus for verbal attacks in lyrics by female rap artists. The hip hop scene is criticized for having a male norm where women's existence is constructed as paradoxical and deviant. While critical of sexism in the hip hop genre, this hip hop feminism extends far beyond the hip hop context. It addresses the major dimensions of gender inequality in contemporary Sweden: men's violence, men's political power, as well as men's sexism in relationships and elsewhere. The extended focus on class and race in lyrics by male artists, and the foregrounding of gender inequality in lyrics by female artists, raises some questions. Does this imbalance reflect male rap artists experiencing more racism than women, or rather that female rap artists experience sexism more severely than racism, or do racism and sexism have an intersectional impact in terms of who is able to claim space within the hip hop genre in the first place? Or is this instead about gendered relations to space, where men are sometimes constructed as more rooted in localized places than women (e.g. Nordin 2007)? These questions go beyond the methodology of the present study, but could be worthy of further investigation, perhaps especially since many new female artists are currently emerging as I write this in the summer of 2014.

There has been an unfortunate assumption in much men and masculinity research that men constitute the primary source of data for understanding masculinity (e.g. Pini and Pease 2013). On the contrary, the focus in *Hip hop feminism in Sweden* on women in hip hop shows that women both criticize and perform different aspects of masculinity. The existence of "female masculinity" thus calls into question the naturalization of the connections between men and masculinity. One implication of this is that "male masculinity" is equally performative: there is no essential gender identity, but only repeated acts which create this impression. Key elements of dominant discourses about masculinity involve being "hard" and displaying a readiness for violence, which is the focus of *Sticky masculinity*. This article deepens

the understanding of how discourses and subjects stick together, and shows that an understanding of masculine subjectivity must take into account both contested discursive social norms and the lived experience of inhabiting them.

Sexuality

Another central element in dominant discourses of masculinity consists of heterosexuality. As is shown in *No homo* there is a strongly heteronormative world-view in Swedish hip hop, but it is also one which on closer inspection can be seen to be full of ambiguity and negotiation. Sexuality is commonsensically thought of as a private matter, whereas in fact norms of sexuality operate across many domains of social life, and regulate interactions and access to institutional resources. Same-sex sexual practices were considered a disease until 1979, but there has been a “new openness” in Sweden since 1998 (Rosenberg 2002, 103). Despite this historical change, non-heterosexual identifications still involve greater risks: of being a target of hate crime, and of losing significant others such as family and friends (Dahl 2005). The prevailing assumption that everybody is heterosexual means that non-heterosexually identified persons repeatedly have to manage “coming out” (M. Lindholm 2003). Gay-, lesbian and queer research has documented how sexuality affects all sorts of aspects of social life in Sweden, such as access and relation to public space (M. Lindholm and Nilsson 2002); to funerals and “grievability” (Svensson 2007); to adult-suitable gender practices (Ambjörnsson and Bromseth 2010); and to diasporic communities (Avrahami 2007).

The turn to queer theory within social research on sexuality has involved focusing on and deconstructing how heterosexuality as a norm is accomplished (e.g. Ambjörnsson 2004). In my data, there is a largely heteronormative world-view, especially among male rappers, as analyzed in *No homo*. Hip hop is talked about as heterosexual *per se*, and there is a policing of sexuality and gender transgressions. On the other hand, this very heterosexuality appears more ambiguous on closer inspection. Metaphors of same-sex attraction are used in ambiguous ways and there are many descriptions of affection between male peers, paired with fierce disavowals of homosexuality. On the assumption that sexuality categories are not static and given but rather continuously created and negotiated, the use of expressions such as “no homo” – which I term *straight inoculations* – can be considered as rhetorical means of sustaining a contested heterosexual identity.

Heterosexuality is traditionally linked to masculinity, and a “fag discourse” is often used to police gender boundaries among boys and men (Pascoe 2007). The queer analysis in *No homo* shows that “homosocial desire” between men tends to be articulated as stronger than heterosexual desire.

Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, one could say that other men constitute the “real partner” whereas the function of women can be to heterosexualize relations between men (Sedgwick 1985). On the other hand, the analysis in *Sticky masculinity* concerns the hardness discourse among men, which in previous research has been described not only as a means to power but also as a source of secret dissatisfaction for boys and an incentive for seeking relationships with girls (Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman 2002, 58–60). Thus, there seems to be a double movement in which relationships between men are constructed as primary, but where women are required in order to heterosexualize the same relationships. At the same time the relationships between men are governed by a hardness discourse, which creates a desire for women onto whom a capacity for being close and affectionate is projected. Gender and sexuality are clearly intertwined here, and the gender norm of being “hard” or non-vulnerable and the sexuality norm of being heterosexual seem to a large extent to work in tandem.

Sexuality intersects to a lesser degree with race and class in my data. The analysis in *Degrees of intersectionality* does show that normative notions of gender and sexuality are often drawn on in critique of class and race inequalities. However, these normative ideals are to a large extent shared over classed and racialized boundaries, and class and race are of little importance for the analysis of male homosocial desire presented in *No homo*. While dominant discourses are clearly heteronormative, the analysis in *No homo* and *Hip hop feminism* also shows that there are instances of more ambiguous songs – but there is only one in my data with an explicit queer subject position.

In sum, in combining rap lyrics as data and a thematic focus on gender, sexuality, race and class, the present study has documented how these categories of inequality have a prominent place in hip hop in Sweden. The polyphony of rap lyrics in Sweden eludes any mono-categorical description, and the lyrics constitute instead an arena where discourses about race, class, gender and sexuality are negotiated and intersecting to various degrees. Despite the relative degree of social equality that in some respects characterizes Sweden as a country, the discursive articulations found in the popular cultural genre of hip hop suggest that multiple and intersecting forms of inequality have not withered away. Hip hop is an arena where many critiques of enduring inequalities are found, but also one in which norms are reproduced. After this exposition of how aspects of the social context are talked about within the texts of the hip hop genre, I will now turn to the theoretical debates to which the present study is also intended to make a contribution.

After Connell: The theory question in men and masculinity research

Men and masculinity research has long been dominated by a “weak structuralism” in the form of Raewyn Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity (Beasley 2012). The theory has an evident appeal from being very clear about men’s privileged position and oppressive practices in the gender order, while at the same time it invites consideration of historical change and differences between different forms of “masculinities”. However, it is precisely this combination of structuralism and variability that has turned out to be problematic, and this can be seen in relation to the concept of *hegemony*, which is central to Connell’s theory (Connell 1995). There is a *hegemonic masculinity* which dominates women on the one hand, but on the other hand also other masculinities, i.e. the complicit, subordinated and marginalized ones. Demetrakis Demetriou identified these two forms of hegemony as external (over women) and internal (over other masculinities) (Demetriou 2001). One could also describe the two senses in the following way. On the one hand, “hegemonic masculinity” denotes a *leadership position* but says nothing about the content of that leadership, because this varies over time and space. On the other hand, “hegemonic masculinity” denotes a *specific content*, namely the explicitly patriarchal and oppressive configurations of practice. How do these two senses of the concept of hegemonic masculinity fit together? Connell assumes that the two concepts of hegemony converge, but this need not always be the case. Jeff Hearn, for instance, has argued that: “If anything, it is the complicit which is most hegemonic” (Hearn 2004, 61). Stephen Whitehead summarizes the critique: “The fundamental inconsistency in the term hegemonic masculinity is that, while it attempts to recognize difference and resistance, its primary underpinning is the notion of a fixed (male) structure.” (Whitehead 2002, 93pp) Similar problems haunt alternative theorizations of masculinity, where structuralist and poststructuralist concepts are used together without sufficient recognition of theoretical tensions (Beasley 2012). There is currently a tendency to summarize and evaluate the accomplishments of the term “hegemonic masculinity” in empirical research across the world (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Hearn et al. 2012; Hearn and Morrell 2012; Messerschmidt 2012). Also, researchers are increasingly turning to other sources of theoretical inspiration (e.g.

Gottzén and Jonsson 2012b). But how can one theorize masculinity, so to speak, “after Connell”?

The present research has been concerned with exploring – through empirical analysis of hip hop in Sweden – how attention to contemporary feminist theory can facilitate theory development within men and masculinity research. Contemporary feminist theory is a multi-faceted enterprise that the present study by no means “covers” nor exhausts. Nevertheless, I have been guided by what I see as some of the central developments. These revolve, first, around the importance of studying gender, not as a separate or primary category of inequality, but as one that is entangled with race, class and sexuality, as foregrounded in *intersectionality* and *queer theory*. Second, much has been gained in feminist theory from an engagement with continental philosophy, particularly the theorizations of discourse and lived experience developed within *poststructuralism* and *feminist phenomenology*. These perspectives are not always considered compatible. For instance, poststructuralist and phenomenological perspectives are often understood to be at odds with each other, while queer theory is sometimes seen to be about gender and sexuality in contrast to intersectionality, considered to be about the triad of race, class and gender. However, while it is important to recognize tensions between perspectives, not everything within these perspectives is necessarily incompatible, and there are several interesting points of connection. My own work is indebted to the work of social and cultural theorist Sara Ahmed, who has shown us new ways of integrating elements from these traditions (Ahmed 2004b; 2006; 2010).¹¹

Intersectionality

To inquire into “masculinity” is to inquire into gender relations, and this is in turn to inquire into questions of inequality in society. To make a long story short, questions of inequality have often been theorized in ways which privilege one specific category of inequality, such as class, gender or race. However, the recognition of multiple and intersecting structures of inequality has led to the development of *intersectionality* as a way of theorizing inequality within sociology, gender studies and related disciplines. An intersectional approach was originally developed by US black feminists who stressed the importance of taking an integrated approach to understanding systematic inequalities in terms of gender, race, class and, to some extent, sexuality

¹¹ Ahmed’s work is currently inspiring feminist scholarship on a variety of topics in Sweden, including not only whiteness (Adeniji 2010; Dahl 2010; Molina 2010) and queer life courses (Ambjörnsson and Jönsson 2010); but also unruly children in preschool (Dolk 2013); women class travelers (Sohl 2014); national mourning (Svensson 2011); transsexual experiences (Bremer 2011); drag kings (Olovsdotter Lööf 2014); old heterosexual men (Sandberg 2011); and sustainable development (Velasquez 2008).

(Hill Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Davis 1981; hooks 2000; Lorde 1984). This involves a critique of mono-categorical approaches that frame inequality issues around a single dimension. In relation to a predominantly white middle class gender-only feminism, black feminists such as bell hooks argue:

Since men are not equals in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to? [...] Implicit in this simplistic definition of women's liberation is a dismissal of race and class as factors that, in conjunction with sexism, determine the extent to which an individual will be discriminated against, exploited, or oppressed. (hooks 2000, 19)

Today, intersectionality is usually understood as an umbrella term for such critical analysis of the intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality, also drawing inspiration from other anti-racist feminisms (Mohanty 2003; Spivak 1993; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). Intersectionality has been much discussed in the last decade in research on gender, race/ethnicity, diaspora, class and sexuality (Brah 1996; Yuval-Davis 2011a; Phoenix and Pattynama 2006; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Carbadó et al. 2013). For instance, in a comparison with the frameworks outlined by Marx, Weber and Bourdieu, Nira Yuval-Davis argues "for intersectionality to be accepted as the most valid contemporary sociological theoretical approach to stratification" (Yuval-Davis 2011b, 156). In Sweden, intersectional approaches were introduced in the 2000s by Diana Mulinari, Paulina de los Reyes and Irene Molina (de los Reyes, Molina, and Mulinari 2002; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; see also Lykke 2003); and have been used in a range of empirical studies (Alinia 2004; Avrahami 2007; Carbin 2010; Laskar 2005; Lundström 2007; Sohl 2014; Sörensdotter 2008). Within an intersectional tradition, broadly speaking, one of the things which has been contested is the usefulness of the very concept of "intersectionality". It is based on the metaphor of "intersection" which is widely acknowledged to be problematic, since it implies that different roads cross at specific points but are otherwise unrelated. However, no alternative suggestion has really caught on (Carbin and Tornhill 2004; Ken 2007). Sometimes, the concept of intersectionality is used in an extended sense to denote analysis of any two or more structures or categories (Hearn 2011; Lykke 2010). However, this usage is controversial since it tends to diminish the anti-racist challenge to white feminism upon which the intersectional tradition is built (Hill Collins 2009; Crenshaw 2011; Petzen 2012; Bilge 2013).

In relation to men and masculinity research, intersectionality has an unclear status. This relation is in focus in the second article of this study, *Degrees of intersectionality*. There are studies which situate men and masculinity in relation to other dimensions of inequality, some of which are in-

spired by Connell (e.g. Pringle 1995; Messerschmidt 1997; Pease 2010; Farahani 2013). At the same time, there has been very little discussion on the implications of intersectional perspectives in relation to the topics of men and masculinity *despite the huge interest in intersectionality within feminist research* in the last decade. Drawing on the empirical analysis of how class, race, gender and to some extent sexuality intersect in Swedish rap lyrics, *Degrees of intersectionality* intervenes by exploring what happens when an intersectional perspective is put to use in relation to men and masculinity. First, this entails a critique of the limitations of a hegemonic masculinity framework in accounting effectively for multiple and intersecting power dimensions. Connell's typology of different masculinities has the merit of directing attention towards factors other than gender, but tends to separate class, race and sexuality into different and distinct "masculinities". This under-communicates how gender norms can be shared across other axes of difference, as well as simultaneous inhabitation of such categories. There are also some doubts about Connell's later asymmetrical use of the psychoanalytical concept of "protest masculinity". The article shows how an intersectional perspective is advantageous in these respects, not least by avoiding slotting race and class inequalities into a list of different "masculinities".

Second, accepting the usefulness of an intersectional perspective in relation to men and masculinity, the focus is directed onto a prevalent distinction between "addition" and "constitution" in intersectional scholarship. The view is often held that an intersectional perspective means conceptualizing different power dimensions as constitutive in the sense that they are not separate and can therefore not be added or subtracted from each other at will. However, while it has been important for non-white women to stress the specificity of their experience in relation to white women and non-white men, who have tended to prefer single-category models, the applicability of this distinction between addition and constitution is not straightforward in the case of men and masculinity. On the contrary, dominant discourses often displace oppressive practices of gender and sexuality onto non-white men. Therefore, it is also important to be able to emphasize the cases where gender and sexuality norms are not specific to particular class or race groups, but rather shared across such differences.

Concurring with some recent writing on intersectionality which stresses the need for retaining openness when it comes to how and how far different power dimensions intersect, I develop the notion of "degrees of intersectionality". This notion has the advantage of keeping open the amount of interconnectedness between different forms of inequality, to be examined empirically in different contexts. While this notion is ultimately limited by the geometrical metaphor – one cannot say precisely in degrees how far different power dimensions intersect – it may go some way to opening up our thinking about masculinity and intersectionality.

Poststructuralism

Researchers within the intersectional tradition differ in their approach to ontology. My own thinking here is based on *poststructuralist feminism*. While structural analyses are often useful in describing the overall picture of inequality, poststructuralist perspectives have complicated the very status of the categories used in describing inequality. In short, rather than taking categories such as “men”, “black” or “homosexual” as given starting points for structural analysis, poststructuralist approaches inquire into how such categories are constructed, sustained and subverted. This understanding of power relations as not only repressive but also productive of social reality stems from the work of Michel Foucault (e.g. Foucault 1976/1990). In this view, discourse is a central concept which refers to “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1969/2002, 49). Consequently, subjects are understood to be discursively positioned rather than prior to or independent of discourse. Furthermore, discourses are always contested, being part of an ongoing but ultimately impossible struggle to fix meaning once and for all ‘as structure’ (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001). In relation to feminist theory, Judith Butler has developed the most influential poststructuralist approach, arguing that gender is “performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its result” (Butler 1990, 33). Poststructuralist perspectives are also increasingly influential within intersectional research (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Bilge 2010; Lutz, Herrera Vivar, and Supik 2011).

In relation to men and masculinity research, poststructuralist approaches have been relatively invisible. In *Sticky masculinity* I show that this does not mean that they have been completely absent, but rather that work on masculinity which explicitly or implicitly draws on poststructuralist modes of thinking has not been considered central with the dominance of structural perspectives. In particular, I offer a rereading of parts of the work of John Stoltenberg, who is usually understood as a radical feminist writer on masculinity (Stoltenberg 2000). My reading suggests that parts of his work are to a large extent compatible with a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity. In this understanding, subjects are discursively constituted by rival and competing discourses which render subjects incoherent and partially opaque to themselves. The main contribution of poststructuralist perspectives to men and masculinity issues is therefore to be able to see *both* that subjects are positioned by dominant discourses, *and* the fissures and negotiations involved. As Jonathan Salisbury and David Jackson put it in 1996: “Boys aren’t just brainwashed by macho values. They don’t just swallow the dominant models of manliness in a docile, passive manner. Instead, they have a much more wry, contradictory approach – half-mocking, half-accepting – both contesting and buying into these models.” (Salisbury and Jackson 1996,

13) The usefulness of a poststructuralist approach to masculinity can be seen, for instance, in the form of *queer theory*.

Queer theory

Poststructuralist feminism is closely related to *queer theory*. Queer theory emerged when lesbian feminist theory and poststructuralism were read together (Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1985; 2008). Gay and lesbian theory had previously challenged “compulsory heterosexuality” in different ways, including its interrelation with a binary notion of gender (Mieli 1980; Rich 1980; Wittig 1992). Simply put, queer theory retains this critique within a poststructuralist frame, by theorizing all gender and sexuality categories as performative accomplishments rather than as stable identities. While queer theory is sometimes constructed at a distance from an intersectional tradition, this view is effectively challenged by the queer of color critique, which explores how sexuality and race are intertwined (Ahmed 2006; El-Tayeb 2011; Ferguson 2004; Puar 2007). In Sweden, queer theory was introduced in the mid-1990s and has been productively used in a wide range of studies (Ambjörnsson 2004; Ambjörnsson and Jönsson 2010; C. Andersson 2011; Avrahami 2007; Berg 2008; Bertilsdotter Rosqvist 2007; Kulick 1996; 2005; Rosenberg 2002; Svensson 2007; Wasshede 2010).

In relation to men and masculinity research, queer theory invites examination of aspects that have not been foregrounded under dominant structural perspectives (e.g. Landreau and Rodriguez 2012). The analysis in *No homo* demonstrates the capacity of queer theory to consider both dominant discourses and recurring ambiguities. As previously described, the article shows that there is an explicitly heteronormative worldview in rap lyrics by male artists, which presumes two distinct genders with a mutual attraction, and where transgressions are policed. At the same time, queer theory enables a closer look at possible fissures and ambiguities. This shows the use of sexually ambivalent metaphors, and much love for male peers. These articulations potentially contradict a heterosexual identity, which is then sustained through the use of expressions such as “no homo”. In order to understand this rhetorical boundary work, I combine the queer emphasis on the non-stability of sexual categories, with rhetorical analysis of how subjects manage their own stakes in their utterances, and develop the notion of “straight inoculations”. The deconstructive powers of queer theory thus enable recognition of the fact that there is not simply a heterosexual hegemonic masculinity which has a solid existence, but that gender and sexuality categories are constantly constructed and negotiated. Furthermore, queer analytical tools also deconstruct the often taken for granted connections between bodies and genders. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has put it:

And when something is about masculinity it is not always ‘about men’. I think it is important to drive a wedge in, early and often and if possible conclusively, between the two topics, masculinity and men, whose relation to one another it is so difficult not to presume. (Sedgwick 1995, 11)

In *Hip hop feminism in Sweden*, I follow Judith Halberstam and others who have written about “female masculinity” (Halberstam 1998; Pascoe 2007). The analysis in this article shows that female artists not only criticize several aspects associated with masculinity and sexism, but that they also perform masculinity in some ways. These ways include being hard and violent, a gangster, or “getting the girls”. Analyzing masculinity beyond bodies culturally recognized as male shows that there is no inherent connection between men and masculinity, and thus denaturalizes this common assumption.

Feminist phenomenology

So far, the theoretical argument has been that masculinity needs to be addressed within a wider understanding of inequality. The intersectionality perspective which takes an integrated approach to race, class and gender is most suitable here. Poststructuralist feminism and queer theory add a critical understanding of the intersectionality of gender and sexuality, and allow a dynamic analysis of inequalities by enabling examination of how they are constructed, sustained and challenged. This poststructuralist achievement is accomplished through the concept of “discourse”. Within poststructuralist theory, discourse does not refer simply to the ordinary sense of “spoken or written language”, but is rather intended as a challenge to the traditional distinction between language and materiality (Butler 1993, 10; Laclau and Mouffe 1987; Torfing 1999, 94pp). However, critics have felt that the use of “discourse” as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of the material and the social nevertheless reinstates a certain centrality of language. This has spurred a new search for theories of materiality within feminist thought. Researchers within the “new material feminism” school have attempted to theorize materiality in ways which do not reduce materiality to culture (e.g. Alaimo and Hekman 2008). While interesting in many ways, the strong emphasis on the agency of matter has been criticized for not paying sufficient attention to social inequalities; for instance, Sara Ahmed argues that there is a tendency that we should “get over” the enduring inequalities of race, gender, class and sexuality (Ahmed 2012, 173–187). Instead, Ahmed’s work returns us to the phenomenological tradition.

Feminist phenomenology is a tradition which stresses the foundational role of embodiment and lived experience (de Beauvoir 1949/2010; Fisher and Embree 2000; Young 2005). Phenomenology and poststructuralism are often seen as incompatible traditions, but there are also interesting connec-

tions (Butler 1989; Oksala 2005). The innovative work of Sara Ahmed shows how a phenomenological vocabulary about bodies, spaces and orientations can be incorporated into and enrich a poststructuralist, queer and intersectional approach. For instance, in the empirical analysis in *Degrees of intersectionality*, I made use of Ahmed's notions of "orientation" and "flow" to describe discourses of class inequality.

Within men and masculinity research, there has been very little engagement with the tradition of feminist phenomenology. In *Sticky masculinity*, I show some of the merits of considering that tradition in relation to the topics of men and masculinity. The analysis in this article does not exhaust the possibilities for gender research to make use of the phenomenological tradition, but nevertheless points to some central insights about subjectivity and lived experience. My argument proceeds through a rereading of the work of masculinity theorist Victor Seidler (Seidler 1989). Seidler is usually classified as a socialist feminist writer on men and masculinity and not as a phenomenologist, and the reception of his work has been somewhat ambiguous. My reading shows that in central respects, his arguments are similar to the ideas within feminist phenomenology in general, and to the work of Toril Moi in particular (Moi 1999). There is a fundamental stress on subjectivity as bodily and as shaped by lived experience in ways which cannot be reduced to abstract and general concepts such as mind, reason, language or discourse. What feminist phenomenology thus brings is a more thorough understanding of *bodies in worlds* than is found in poststructuralism. In *Sticky masculinity*, I discuss the relative benefits and drawbacks of poststructuralist feminism and feminist phenomenology in thinking about men, masculinity and subjectivity. A model of subjectivity characterized by incoherence and conflicting attachments is identified in Stoltenberg, and a model characterized by a fundamental stress on lived experience is identified in Seidler. I argue that a turn to the theoretical vocabulary of Sara Ahmed offers possibilities for retaining what is valuable in both traditions. The notion of "sticky masculinity" thus involves acknowledging both that subjects are constituted of various conflicting social norms (discourses), and that bodies are shaped by the signs which they encounter and are repeatedly associated with.

Towards a theoretical moment

In 2000, Connell aptly described men and masculinity research as being in an "ethnographic moment" due to the proliferation of empirical research on men and masculinity across the world (Connell 2000, 9). Theoretically, however, much of men and masculinity research is still grappling with Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, developed in the 1980s. The present study has been intended – both drawing on and contributing to a new wave

of theoretically informed studies – as a challenge to some of the assumptions underlining that approach. The theoretical approach defended in this thesis instead brings together elements from intersectionality, poststructuralist feminism, queer theory and feminist phenomenology in developing an outline of an alternative perspective. This assemblage has the merit of accounting in more productive ways for multiple and intersecting power relations of which men and masculinity are parts; it considers power dimensions not as given and static, but as continuously constructed and negotiated, which enables consideration of stability as well as fissures. Moreover, it tries to account for both cultural, contested discursive norms and bodies inhabiting worlds. It has thus been the argument of the present thesis that giving increased attention to contemporary developments within feminist theory offers useful possibilities for rethinking some of the assumptions that have continued to be prevalent in men and masculinity research despite sustained criticism. Furthermore, what this work has shown is that bringing in feminist theory is not only a question of providing new conceptual resources, but also entails rethinking some of the established theoretical historiography within men and masculinity research. But if the use of feminist theory, beyond the theory of hegemonic masculinity, is only at its beginning within men and masculinity research, what else lies ahead?

I wish for what I would call a *theoretical moment* to succeed the extended empirical or ethnographic one in men and masculinity research. A point of departure would be to consider men and masculinity less as a unitary field held together by one theoretical framework, and more as a topic which could be studied from a range of different feminist perspectives. This would entail recognition of the fact that while hegemony theory has been a productive resource in men and masculinity research, its potential has by now probably been realized. If this assumption is accepted, this opens up a series of interesting questions to be explored, which could constitute a new research agenda. What else has been said in previous research on men and masculinity that has not been accommodated within the hegemonic masculinity framework, and how could such writing be rearticulated from contemporary theoretical horizons? What are the implications of the “dizzying variety” of contemporary feminist theoretical perspectives for men and masculinity research?

To be more precise, there are a number of things which would merit further attention. For instance, the works on masculinity by prominent theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and bell hooks are still awaiting discussion and assessment within men and masculinity research (Bourdieu 2001; hooks 2005). There is also a need for further engagement with poststructuralist perspectives. It would be helpful if the relatively invisible “poststructuralist tradition” within men and masculinity research were reconstructed and evaluated as such (e.g. Jackson 1990; Collier 1998; Petersen 1998). I would also like to see further discussion on the implications of Foucault’s notion of power as a “complex strategical situation” for the understanding of men and masculinity

(Foucault 1976/1990, 93). The phenomenological tradition has only recently become considered in men and masculinity research, such as in Linn Sandberg's use of Luce Irigaray, and may have other interesting things to offer (Sandberg 2011). The recent upsurge of interest in post-human materialism, affect theory and interpretations of Gilles Deleuze within feminist theory calls for these perspectives to be put under scrutiny in order to determine the extent to which they can be useful in critical projects regarding men and masculinity (Gottzén 2011). Furthermore, the verdict on the psychoanalytical tradition has varied historically, but such perspectives have often suffered from a limited understanding of social power (Young 1997). However, psychoanalysis continues to be a source of inspiration for queer and anti-racist feminist theory (Butler 1997b; Kilomba 2010; Thomas 2008). These uses of the theoretical resources of the psychoanalytic tradition call for further assessment within men and masculinity research. Moreover, the tradition of radical feminism, with its characteristic focus on and critique of men's oppressive practices, is perhaps most valuable in critical studies on men (Pringle 1995). Yet, in contemporary debates in feminist theory, radical feminism is rarely considered, as Clare Hemmings critically points out:

Indeed, so strong is the certainty that certain kinds of Western feminist thought belong in the past, it can be something of a shock to realize that radical feminists, for example, continue to write in the present that has – surely? – successfully debunked their claims to relevance. (Hemmings 2011, 231)

This suggests a potential for a reappraisal, particularly if it would be possible to retain the radical feminist insights on men's violence within more post-structuralist modes of theorizing. Furthermore, recent research on men and masculinity in the Swedish context has revealed the increasing popularity of interactionist theories (K. Andersson 2008; Egeberg Holmgren 2011b; Nystrom 2012). This development calls for more theoretical discussion of the virtues of studying men and masculinity as situated accomplishments.

There is a further crucial aspect which needs serious consideration, and it concerns the narrative construction of men and masculinity as a field or body of research. There needs to be investigation of how men and masculinity research *take shape* both in relation to various academic disciplines such as sociology, education, film and literature, but even more importantly in relation to other categories of inequality. An intersectionality perspective needs to be used not only in empirical research, but also in thinking critically about how men and masculinity research is itself situated, and who is included in and excluded from consideration when "men and masculinity" is the topic. There are by now fields of inquiry such as LGBT, queer and transgender research, as well as critical race and disability studies, which have obvious connections and overlaps with men and masculinity as topics. As Sara Ahmed writes: "Given that relationships of power 'intersect', how we inhabit a

given category depends on how we inhabit others.” (Ahmed 2006, 136) Yet men and masculinity research is not always in dialogue with these fields. To the extent that “men and masculinity research” is constructed and narrated as distinct from these related and overlapping fields, one may reasonably suspect that the research gathered under this label will to a certain degree reflect the concerns of the most privileged minority within this category, i.e. white, able-bodied, heterosexual, middle-class cis-men.

These considerations inevitably point to a need for more connectivity. I am reminded of Erving Goffman’s closing remarks in *Stigma* about research on different categories of inequality:

Perhaps in each case the choice would be to retain the old substantive areas, but at least it would be clear that each is merely an area to which one should apply several perspectives, and that the development of any one of these coherent analytic perspectives is not likely to come from those who restrict their interest exclusively to one substantive area. (Goffman 1963/1990, 174)

If we still need men and masculinity research, it should have less isolation – from feminist theory, from contemporary critical debates, from related areas of research. After all, no man is an island, and nor is men and masculinity research.

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* These records are not full-length albums.

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