The Depiction of Women in Rap and Pop Lyrics
Abstract

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The aim of the study is to investigate song lyrics within rap and pop music from a cultural and a gender perspective, focusing on the depiction of women. The investigation focuses on the nouns the songwriter use to refer to the concept of WOMAN. Twenty songs from each genre are conveyed in this study. The results show that rap lyrics contain multiple nouns referring to the concept of WOMAN that depict women in a negative way. Pop lyrics do not contain these words and thus have a more positive way of depicting women. Nouns that occur in both genres tend to be of positive value whereas nouns that are only represented in the rap genre tend to be of negative value, something that indicates these nouns to be bearers of cultural values. It is easier to distinguish hip-hop culture, of which rap is a part, due to the fact that it consists of distinctive language that is highly connected to that particular genre. Pop music however, is very broad and also more difficult to distinguish as a unique culture compared to hip-hop. The language used in pop lyrics is rather commonplace and does not stand out in the crowd as the language in rap lyrics does.

Keywords: Culture, gender, lyrics, music, pop, women, rap.
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1. Introduction
The world of music is vast and billions of songs in different genres have been produced through the years. Every song produced has some kind of message to it that is forwarded through the lyrics. Two popular and vast music genres are pop and rap that each has got millions of fans. Pop, which is played on radio stations every day, may perhaps be seen as more widespread or accessible than rap music. Considering the two genres conveyed in this investigation, pop music is the one I personally am more acquainted with since it is often played on radio. Rap music is rather unfamiliar to me and I am not as versed in culture of rap. When listening to music in general one can tell the difference between genres partly by the sound of the music and partly by the lyrics.

Pop music is very global and if comparing lyrics between the two genres one may interpret that the aim of the pop music might not be to make statement or convey a clear message, but to reach as many people as possible and gain popularity. Rap music, which is a part of the hip-hop culture, is characterized by its vulgar language may not be played on radio to the same extent due to the language. As opposed to pop, rap music often makes a clear statement and certain messages that the artist wants to convey, are forwarded through the lyrics. An interesting aspect regarding the lyrics within each genre is how certain things are depicted. The two genres have different ways of expressing the image of gender and for instance; the depiction of women. When listening to pop music, the lyrics are almost exclusively about love or unrequited love, which is conveyed in a rather innocent way. In rap lyrics however, the artists use vulgar sexual words and often rap about women or other rappers in foul language. The hip hop culture, of which rap music plays a significant part, is a bit narrower than the pop culture concerning the amount of listeners and accessibility. That could result in the hip hop culture appearing slightly more static and consistent, compared to pop, which is in constant change.

The way lyrics are structured and what words the songwriter uses to describe certain things naturally have an impact on the appearance of the song and thus the interpretation of it. According to Citron (2000:120) the songwriter is affected by cultural circumstances that naturally affect the written piece. In other words, culture of different music genres or areas where a certain music genre is dominant, affects the outcome of the written lyrics.
For instance, the language of the suburbs tends to differ from the language used among the socialite, and thus the music produced within these two parts of society also differs in lyrics.

1.1 Aim, scope and research questions
This study aims to investigate a number of song lyrics from two different music genres, rap and pop (see Appendix 1). This will be done from a cultural and a gender perspective where a comparison between the two genres is going to be made. To narrow this investigation, it focuses on the nouns that songwriters use to refer to the concept WOMAN and how these differ between the two genres. For example:

\[\text{Baby you light up my world like nobody else, the way that you flip your hair makes me overwhelmed}\]

Here, the songwriter uses the word \textit{baby} instead of the word \textit{woman}. The study will be based on cultural and gender perspectives in terms of how women are depicted through using different nouns referring to the concept of WOMAN. While the material selected for this investigation is probably a mix between several subcultures within the two genres, in this study the songs are taken to represent the genre as a whole. The material was delimited to consist of songs that are made or sung by male artist since it is presumably more common for male artists to write and/or sing about women than it is for female artists. The following research questions will inform the present study:

- Which nouns are used to refer to the concept of WOMAN?
- How frequent are these nouns?
- In what ways do nouns referring to the concept of WOMAN differ between the two genres?
- In what ways do these nouns depict women?
- How is culture reflected in these choices of nouns?
2. Contextual background
This chapter provides a more detailed presentation of the two musical genres that are the target of this investigation, locating them in a socio-cultural and historical setting.

2.1 Rap music
Together with graffiti, breakdance and deejaying, rap music is one of the four building blocks of the culture of hip hop (Britannica, 2013). Rap music has its origins in West Africa where musicians were telling stories to the beat of a drum. Furthermore it has its roots in the Caribbean Islands folk music as well where musicians were telling stories in rhyme. It first became popular in the U.S, and was seen as a type of poetry or street art performed mostly by African-American teenagers.

It is defined as a type of singing or chanting rhyming lyrics, usually to a beat (Plasticlittleraps.com 2012). Rap music did not have its breakthrough until 1979 in the Bronx district in New York City, when a band called “Sugarhill Gang” emerged and completely revolutionized the genre (Gupta, 2012). According to Lommel (2001:12), rap music is a tool for young men to seek social status. Lommel further argues that when rap first emerged from hip-hop culture and grew to national attention, it had the sound of war and violence and the lyrics often celebrated killing cops, hating women and taunting other rappers or “enemies”.

2.2 Pop music
According to the Cambridge dictionary the definition of pop music is “modern popular music, usually with a strong beat, created with electrical or electronic equipment, and easy to listen to and remember” (Dictionary.cambridge.org 2013). Pop music is also defined as the ever-changing music favored by the people and although not specifically applied until the 20th century it could be traced back a few decades before that (Shinemusic.com 2013). However, it further developed at the beginning of the last century and was revolutionized through the new media of the time. Music radio was born in the 1920s which contributed to pop music becoming a well-known music genre (Bennet, Shank & Toynbee. 2006:1). Some of the first pop stars were The Crooners, Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, who sold millions of records. Today’s modern pop charts did not exist until the 1950’s when the first “top twenty” list was recorded. The Beatles revolutionized the pop music genre with their melodies and had a lot of influence on that generation.
The 1990’s was the time of the boy bands; a group of good-looking young male singers that performed catchy songs. The band “Take That” was a huge success in Britain and not long after that, American boy bands such as N’Sync and Backstreet Boys emerged. America has also bred some of the world’s most famous solo artists within pop such as Britney Spears, Mariah Carey, and Justin Timberlake et cetera (Shinemusic.com 2013).

3 Theoretical background and previous research
This chapter contains theories and previous research connected to the topics of rap and pop music. The theories and research conveyed are the basis of the analysis of the result.

3.1 Theoretical background
This study will theoretically be based on cultural and gender perspectives. Green (1997:2) suggests that the general significance of art changes over history and differs between cultures. In addition, Citron (2000:120-121) argues that music grows out of a specific social context and she believes that music, in many ways expresses fundamental assumptions about the culture in which it originates. The person writing the song is also affected by cultural circumstances and assumptions which naturally affect the piece that is written. In terms of aesthetics, music involves communication between the composer and the recipient. Furthermore, Citron argues that music performs important cultural work regarding reproducing societal values and ideologies. Important social variables such as for example class and gender can be inscribed in the lyrics that accompany a musical piece. These will function as means for the representation of reality that the songwriter wants to convey. While it is of significance to distinguish such representations from real life experiences, it is the representation that is in focus in the present study.

Bryman (2011:37-39) discusses the concept of constructionism connected to culture where he argues that culture is not a reality which affect humans, but the other way around. It is a reality that humans construct and constantly reconstruct; hence humans create culture and not the opposite. The category of “masculinity” is for instance a type of social construction which is maintained through people’s interaction with each other. Social construction therefore, varies with time and space. This approach also includes the type of language that is used to describe the different categories within social construction, such as masculinity.
According to Aaltio and Mills (2002:4) it is important not to confuse the concepts of “sex” and “gender”, since there is a difference between the two. Sex is the biological classification of humans into women and men, whereas gender refers to the cultured knowledge that differentiates the two. Furthermore Aaltio & Mills (2002:4) argue that feminine and masculine gender consists of the ideals and values originated from culture. Understanding what gender means therefore equals understanding cultural dimensions.

The definition of gender as consisting of ideas and values of culture could also be connected to the categories within the social construction that Bryman (2011:37-39) discusses. According to Connell (2009:106) the feminist movement’s idea of power as a dimension of gender is relevant to discuss, for instance the image of men as the ruling gender and the portrayal in media of women as passive and stupid. Moreover in many parts of the world, it is still accepted that husbands and fathers have power over their wives and daughters. Burr (1998:3) discusses the gender differences in conversation and states that “in mixed sex groups, men interrupt more and offer more direct requests and statements”. Moreover Burr (1998:3) argues that women’s and men’s interaction with each other in conversations are suffused by power relations. This statement corresponds to what Connell (2009:106) writes regarding the connection between gender and power, in both cases within conversation.

3.2 Previous research
A study of a similar topic has been made by Robert Valsinger (2008) at the Stockholm University, Sweden. In his bachelor thesis he investigates the depiction or imaging of women within the Swedish and American hip-hop culture where he compares the two countries, mainly concerning music. His investigation is based on questions that convey the image of women within hip-hop music. Materials were collected by interviewing and sending out questionnaires to female and male Swedish hip-hop artist active at that time. The result of this investigation showed that the lyrics within hip-hop music, which is very similar to rap music, often focus on the female body, depicting women as sexual objects. However that depiction is not always representative of the general concept of hip-hop but differs between artists. Furthermore the result shows that the American hip-hop culture is more sexually discriminating than the Swedish (2008:27). In addition the result also shows that it is important for male artists to create a certain image of themselves as being tough and
powerful. This is done by superordinating themselves to others, such as women and this comes across openly in their lyrics (2008:29).

4. Materials and method
This section presents the material and methodology used in the study to achieve the purpose and answer the research questions. Furthermore a critical discussion of the methodology will be held.

4.1 Materials
The study is based on forty song lyrics from the two selected genres, half of which belong to the rap music genre and the other half to the pop music genre (see Appendix 1). It is thus a qualitative study where the investigation focuses merely on few of the songs within two vast music genres. To collect the material, the key words rap artists and pop artists where searched on Google, which resulted in lists of different artists within the two genres from which I manually picked out 20 artists from each genre. The list of pop artists resulted in a mix between different nationalities, whereas the rap artists are solely from the United States due to the fact that when searching for rap artists solely American artists appeared. Furthermore I searched a website called “letssingit.com” and retrieved lists of songs made by the different artists. Before choosing songs they were examined to make sure that they contained nouns that refer to the concept of WOMAN. The songs were thus not completely randomly chosen but strategically selected to enable an analysis that would reflect the aim of the study. Importantly, one aspect that was not taken in consideration when collecting material was if the nouns were used in a positive or negative context.

4.2 Method
This both a quantitative and a qualitative study that investigates a small part of two vast music genres. A qualitative methodology refers to research that produces descriptive information such as people’s own written or spoken words (Taylor & Bogdan 1998:7). The two genres were chosen due to the presumption that the two different genres would be reflected in different choices of nouns referring to the concept of WOMAN. The sample of lyrics is solely written by male artists merely because it is presumably more common for male artists to write about women than it is for female artists. The songs where put into a document, one for each
genre and the nouns were located and counted (see Table 1) with the search function in Microsoft Word.

Although the songs contained a number of different types of nouns, some of them were deselected due to the fact that they were not as frequently occurring as the other nouns (see 5.1). Subsequently, an analysis of the results was made, reflecting the theories and previous research. Some difficulties regarding gathering of theories appeared during the process as it was little to be found concerning pop music. Also, no previous research regarding pop music was found relevant to be incorporated in this study. A lot more theory was to be found connected to rap music which contributed to the theoretical section being somewhat heavier on theory connected to rap music.

4.3 Discussion
Bailey (1987:83) argues that one advantage of performing a study based on samples is that it is less time consuming than doing a quantitative type of research. Selecting only a few songs from each genre narrows down the investigation and thus makes it somewhat less time consuming. One thing to consider when writing a thesis is whether the investigation is valid and reliable or not. Carmines and Zeller (1979:12) define a measuring tool to be valid if it does what it is intended to do, i.e. that it measuring what it purports to measure. Carmines and Zeller (1979:12) further argue that reliability is the tendency towards consistency found in repeated measurements of the same phenomenon.

However, there are some things that could be questioned regarding the methodology used in this thesis. Since the material was collected partly by selection and partly at random it is slightly ambiguous. According to Carlsson (1984:74) it is important to consider how to choose samples that could best be generalized connected to the area that you want to investigate. By finding artists in each genre through using Google as a tool only gave me the artists that Google found relevant to my search. Hopefully Google is reliable and valid so as to ensure that the artists shown could be taken to represent the music genre as a whole.

However, Google could also be a source of error in matter of the generalization of the artists chosen. Then again since Google is likely to pick out the most well-known artists rather than artists who represent women in stereotyped ways, my data is not likely to be skewed by the search engine. Also, Google is a vast source of information, used by a billion
people, which presumably makes it somewhat reliable and valid. When choosing songs they were first examined to make sure that the lyrics contained nouns that refer to the concept of woman. If the songs would have been totally randomly chosen, the result would have been different. However considering the aim of the study I believed that by choosing songs that actually contained the specific nouns, the study became more valid.

As the analysis of the results is somewhat individual concerning the interpretation of context in which the nouns occur, I chose to interpret this from my presumptions of what the general interpretation would be like. This is naturally something that may affect the reliability since others investigating this might interpret the contexts in other ways.

5. Results and analysis
This section presents the results and analysis of the investigation, based on the research questions. Firstly the results are presented followed by an analysis connected to the theories and the previous research.

5.1 Overview of entire material
When gathering the data of the song lyrics, multiple types of nouns referring to the concept of woman were found. The table below shows examples of which the types of nouns that were found and the number of tokens of each noun type in the lyrics. Nouns that occurred less than 7 times were deselected in the investigation.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns referring to the concept of woman (target words)</th>
<th>Number of tokens in pop lyrics: 20 songs</th>
<th>Number of tokens in rap lyrics: 20 songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bitch/ Bitches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babe</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby girl</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl/ Girls</td>
<td>94/2</td>
<td>55/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoe/ Hoes (whore)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>178</strong></td>
<td><strong>207</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both singular and plural forms of the nouns occur, which are added in the same column. To distinguish them, they are divided by a slash. That also applies to the columns that display the
number of tokens of each noun. It shows how many singular forms as well as plural forms there are. The word *bitch* for example occurs 38 times and the plural form *bitches* occurs 19 times in the rap lyrics. The plural form of certain nouns is markedly more frequently used in rap lyrics compared to pop where the lyrics almost exclusively contain the singular noun form. As the table shows there are a number of nouns that occur in both genres with different amount of tokens. It is rather clear that within the rap lyrics there are more types of nouns used than within the pop lyrics. Within the pop lyrics however, there are fewer types of nouns represented but as they occur, they do so in a larger number of tokens. Frequent nouns within the rap lyrics are *bitch* and *hoe*; which are associated with negative values and will be named as “nouns of negative value” throughout the thesis. In pop music however those words are not represented at all however nouns of more innocent meaning such as *girl* or *baby*, exemplified in the next chapter.

5.2 Presentation of individual nouns
This section presents a close investigation of the nouns that have been found to occur in the lyrics. The section is divided into subsections based on what nouns occurred in both genres and how they differ from each other. The terms “positive” and “negative context” are used in this chapter, which refers to the closest words surrounding the nouns. For instance, if the surrounding words create a context of negative connotation it is considered to be negative and vice versa. Although interpretations of contexts are individual, the presumed general interpretation is representing whether contexts are positive or negative. The terms “nouns of negative value” and “nouns of positive value” are also used simply denoting the pragmatic use of these nouns, in general. A general introduction to the meaning of these nouns is also going to be presented. In each subsection the examples within rap lyrics are displayed followed by an analysis. Secondly examples within pop lyrics are displayed, also followed by an analysis. This outline applies to each subsection throughout the section.

5.2.1 Nouns occurring in both rap and pop
Three nouns were found to occur in both rap and pop lyrics: *baby*, *girl* and *girls*. In the following, I will first give a general introduction to the meaning of these nouns. Subsequently, I will illustrate and analyze how these nouns are used in the data.
The meaning of a word may be numerous, which also applies for the word baby. It partly refers to an infant or a woman that you are fond of but also to something that is small or adjusted to small children (COHA 2013), for example; baby dog, baby bicycle et cetera. The meaning gives an innocent impression of the word.

1) Be there for you, baby care for you. When my dogs stare at you, never sharin you and to my ex-girlfriend, never comparing you

2) Do you really want me, baby? Cause I want you

In these examples the noun baby, referring to the concept of WOMAN is used in a positive context and rather frequently in the overall lyrics. The women that the artists address are people they care about and have strong feelings for. The other occurrences of this noun in the lyrics are mainly used in positive context except in four cases out of the total 46 occurrences seen in Table 1. This contradicts what Valsinger (2008:29) argues, that male hip-hop and rap artists portray themselves as strong and powerful through subordination of women in their lyrics, since in these examples the artists appear rather vulnerable. However, this still occurs in minor occasions compared to the negative contexts. In addition, some vulgar words are still used along with the word baby, which makes the context slightly ambiguous. For example;

- I say her pussy okay but her face good. Baby come on and spend a day with a young man

This example leads to some ambiguity since the word baby is used in a way where the artist considers the woman to be beautiful and he wants to spend time with her. However when making comments about her genitals the lyrics become rather vulgar. In this case it may be interpreted as possible for the noun to be used in positive context yet surrounded with vulgar words. Perhaps vulgar words do not need to determine whether the context is positive or negative. Moreover, examples from the pop lyrics are displayed on the following page.
3) *Baby* you light up my world like nobody else, the way that you flip your hair makes me overwhelmed

4) I can be your hero *baby* I can kiss away the pain. I will stand by you forever you can take my breath away.

In these examples as well as in each occurrence in the pop lyrics, the noun *baby* depicts the female as someone close to the artist’s heart. The noun is overall used in contexts of mutual love as well as unrequited love between the artist and the person he sings to. In both examples it is evident that the noun *baby* functions as a form of address, speaking to the woman in the song. This phenomenon is represented in each of the total 48 occurrences of the noun *baby* seen in Table 1. In example 4 as well as in several other pop lyrics, the artists seem to express an urge to protect the women which may be connected to the meaning of the word. As they use the noun *baby*, it may indicate an image of the women being fragile and need to be taken care of. This may be connected to what Connell (2009:106) writes about the image of men being the ruling and stronger gender i.e. that men feel that they need to take care of women and protect them, which somewhat enhances the image of men being stronger.

Another aspect of this is that pop lyrics may paint a false picture of what love should be like. Many songs claim how wonderful love is, painting an image of life being perfect as soon as you meet the love of your life and explicitly describes feelings and actions. Many young listeners may perhaps compare the feeling they get when listening to pop music, with the feeling they get when meeting a partner. Perhaps that feeling does not correspond to what the music says about love which may lead to ambiguity concerning what love should be like.
Another noun that occurs in both rap and pop is the word *girl*. The word *girl* refers to a young female (COHA 2013).

5) You like his money, you’ll be his honey. Get the truth – no excuse – you’re a great big dummy! DUMB *GIRL*, DUMB *GIRL*!

6) I got my glove on and you the punch bag, Mike Tyson tats all over my face, might bite ya and I don’t even care if you tell. Baby I like to share, now ya *girls* want some, *girl* yea, *girl* yea, *girl* stop.

7) Gotta dodge all the blowjobs, getting hard cause you know how these *girls* are. Wearing tight shit, no panties, no bra running up to my car with ménage a trois suggestions

Even if the noun *girl* is of rather innocent and positive meaning, it is put into negative context, something that differs if comparing to the word *baby*. Therefore, it becomes evident that although the noun referring to the concept of WOMAN is of positive value, the context in which it occurs is not always positive. In the first example the woman is displayed as dumb. The second example, which is a clear example of what Lommel (2001:12) argues concerning lyrics to be about hating women, the artist rap about hitting the woman without concerning potential consequences. The third example is vulgar and sexual, portraying the girls as somewhat light-footed young women. In the first two examples the noun is used as a form of address whereas in example 7 it is not. The most common form that is used in the lyrics is the singular noun form *girl* that is almost exclusively used as a form of address except in one or two occurrences. The plural noun form *girls* are not as frequent and when it is used it does not occur as a form of address except in one case, seen in example 6. Moreover, examples from the pop lyrics are displayed on the following page.
8) N girl you’re like an angel from above, sent here to shower me with your love
9) The whole world stops and stares for a while, cause girl you’re amazing, just the way you are.
10) What nobody knew, she was my girl, yes I am the one who fell in love
11) And don’t go around breaking young girls’ hearts

The examples above display the noun girl in positive context, portraying the woman as an angel and someone beautiful. In the pop lyrics, the singular noun form is most frequently used. It is used as a form of address in the majority of the occurrences in the lyrics namely 58 times out of the total 94 displayed in Table 1. The plural form is less frequently occurring and is not used as a form of address. Compared to the noun baby where some lyrics indicate that the woman needs to be protected, the noun girl is most often put in contexts where the women appear to be more independent, admired by the male artists. In one occasion the possessive form my girl is used, seen in example 2. This grammatical form may specify different kinds of interpretations. It may be interpreted as something innocent, that the artist merely wants to point out to the listener that the song is about a woman he is seeing.

Again, it may also be related to what Connell (2009:106) writes about the image of men being the ruling gender and in this case, as the possessive form is used, the artist indicates that he “owns” the girl. In this case, the girl is not displayed as independent.

5.2.2 Nouns occurring only in rap
In the rap lyrics there are several nouns that are only represented in this genre such as; bitch, hoe and baby girl.

According to COHA (2013) the word bitch refers to several things. It partly refers to a female dog but is also used in some contexts to describe a woman of easy virtue. The word hoe (whore) refers to a prostitute. These nouns are known as “nouns of negative value” in the following analysis. The term baby girl refers to an infant of female sex. It may also refer to a girl you are fond of (COHA 2013), as seen in example 6.
The initial four examples show that the nouns that are of negative value are also put in negative contexts. The adjoining lyrics are very sexual and vulgar and portray women as easy objects that seem to accept whatever sexual action the artists want to perform. This gives the impression that women are subordinate and have no saying in the matter. The fact that nouns of negative value occur in rap music is likely to correspond to what Citron (2000:120) believes; that music expresses central assumptions about the culture in which it originates. Hence the lyrics included in this investigation somehow reflect or express cultural messages within the subculture of rap. Therefore, the nouns of negative value, as the ones in examples 1-5, somewhat characterize the genre and carry a cultural message. This is supported by the fact that this type of language does not occur in other genres other than the ones adjoining to rap, such as hip-hop.

As Valsinger (2008:29) mentions in his thesis, male rap artists have a tendency to portray themselves as powerful and tough by superordinating themselves to women. Using the words *bitch* and *hoe* is a clear example of super ordination; that the artist is better than the woman or *bitch* he is rapping about. Examples 12-16 correspond to what Connell (2009:106), Burr (1998:3) and Valsinger (2008:29) states regarding the *image* of men being the ruling gender and male rap artists’ tendency to subordinate women in order to maintain a powerful
and tough image. For instance, in example 16 the artist raps about urinating and defecating on women, perhaps not literally but as a metaphor to show that the women depicted in the lyrics are below the artist’s status. In addition, Burr (1998:3) and Connell (2009:106) mention power being a part of gender and how this is manifested by interaction. The image of men as the ruling gender and the portrayal in media of women being stupid is certainly something that is reflected in some of the examples illustrated in this subsection. Moreover, nouns of negative value referring to the concept of WOMAN used within this genre are examples of what Aalto, Mills (2002:4) and Bryman (2011:37-39) discusses regarding the concept of social construction; that culture is created through interaction between humans, such as view upon gender and language. Since it originated from The Bronx (Gupta, 2012), the language they used in that area at that time, naturally spread to the music as well. It is a fact that within the hip-hop culture, of which rap music plays a significant part, foul language is a natural feature. For people within this culture, the vulgar language might be seen as something within the norm and is perhaps not seen as equally offensive as it would to someone that is not a part of this culture.

When looking at examples given in this chapter, that represents a significant part of the overall lyrics in this investigation, one can tell that the artists often refer to plural nouns, for instance bitches and hoes. This may indicate that the artists see the women as a group, perhaps a powerful group that needs to be weakened through subordination in the lyrics. If so, the usage of these plural nouns may signify that artists are intimidated by women as a strong powerful gender. In this context, as opposed to what Connell writes regarding the image of men and females (2009:106), the women are no longer seen as the weaker gender, but perhaps as a threat that needs to be diminished.

The term baby girl is one of the few types of nouns that occurs in positive context and has a positive meaning to it. One thing that differs between the nouns of negative value and the noun baby girl is that the nouns of negative value are used when the artists rap about women and not as a form of address. When the artists use nouns of positive value, they do so to address the women they rap about, which makes it more personal. Furthermore the artists do not seem to acknowledge a personal relation to the women referred to in negative nouns.
5.2.3 Nouns occurring only in pop
One noun was found that only occur in pop lyrics; *babe*, which is rather frequently occurring within this genre. In the following, I will first give a general introduction to the meaning of the noun. Subsequently, I will illustrate and discuss how this noun is used in the data.

The meaning of the word *babe* varies and may refer to an infant as well as an attractive woman or someone you care deeply about (COHA 2013), as seen in the examples below.

18) *Babe* I’m here again, *babe* where have you been. *Babe* I’m back again, I come to your door to see you again but where you once stood was an old man instead.

19) Ooo I need your love *babe*, guess you know it’s true. Hope you need my love *babe*, just like I need you

In each occurrence of the noun *babe* found in all of the lyrics, it is used as a form of address. It is used solely in positive context and often connected to the theme of love. Since the meaning of the word *babe* is inter alia referring to an attractive woman, this expression includes the image of certain physical attributes which may be interpreted as superficial. The word is exclusively used as a form of address suggesting a personal relationship between the artist and the woman he sings to. This might make it easier for listeners to relate to, since it is on a personal level.

6. Conclusion and discussion
This section presents a brief summary of the investigation and the results. Furthermore conclusions regarding the results will be discussed. In addition a discussion concerning the method is going to be presented.

This study aimed at investigating a number of song lyrics within two vast music genres; rap and pop. The investigation focuses on what nouns the songwriter use to refer to the concept WOMAN and in what ways these nouns depict women based on the meaning of the words as well as the contexts in which they occur.
Six different nouns were included in the investigation, each of which was used in a certain context. Overall, the results show that nouns referring to the concept of woman that are connected to positive meaning and value occur in both genres but are more frequent within pop. In addition, nouns connected to negative meaning and value, are solely represented in the rap genre.

Concerning the rap lyrics, nouns referring to the concept of woman connected to negative value such as bitch and hoe frequently occur both in singular and plural forms. The nouns are also put in negative contexts, often rather discriminating in a sexual and aggressive way. This concludes the fact that women are depicted in negative ways. In addition, according to previous research, male rap artists have a tendency of superordinating themselves to women in their lyrics in order to maintain a powerful and tough image. This enhances the conclusion of negative depiction of women in rap lyrics. As theory shows, the way the artist expresses himself through music is also representative of culture. This may explain the usage of negative nouns and the negative depiction of women since it thus may reflect a part of that specific culture. Furthermore the results show that when using nouns of negative value, women are often referred to as a group such as bitches and hoes. This may indicate that women are seen as a powerful gender that needs to be weakened, which in that case may be another explanation to why nouns of negative value are used and the context in which they occur. However, there are also nouns of positive meaning that somewhat contradicts the previous statement concerning super ordination of men in rap lyrics. Some nouns and the contexts in which they appear display the artists as rather vulnerable men and that they genuinely care for the women they rap about. This is however minor occurring compared to the occurrence of nouns of negative value.

Regarding the pop lyrics, the results show that the occurrence of nouns of negative value, as the ones conveyed in the rap lyrics, are non-existent. This may be due to the fact that pop music, that theory portray as the genre favored by the people, aims at reaching as many people as possible and therefore offensive language is not suitable in that context. The songs often convey the theme of love and the contexts in which the nouns occur are positive in terms of non-existing offensive language. It is evident that the songs almost exclusively refer to the singular noun form such as girl or babe. This fact may indicate a more personal relation to the woman that the artist addresses, which is perhaps easier for the listener to relate to than
if the plural noun form is used. The contexts in which certain nouns occur, point toward the fact that the image of independence of women varies. In some contexts, the lyrics portray the man as being protective, taking care of the woman whereas in other contexts the man is looking up to the woman, admiring her. Although the pop lyrics in this investigation are displaying a positive image of women, they may be misleading regarding the image of love. Love is a common theme within pop lyrics and the way it is portrayed, including the depiction of women, may result in certain kinds of assumptions of what love should be like. If these assumptions do not correspond to reality, it may affect the listener.

It is easier to distinguish hip-hop culture, of which rap is a part, due to the fact that it consists of distinctive language that is highly connected to that particular genre. Pop music however, is very broad and also more difficult to distinguish as a unique culture compared to hip-hop or rap. The language used in the lyrics is rather commonplace and does not stand out in the crowd as rap lyrics do.

There are several other ways that this study could have been carried out and with hindsight it would have been better to further narrow it down by investigating only one genre instead of two. This investigation merely peels the surface of something that would have been interesting to dig deeper into. This study illuminates certain patterns in each genre concerning what nouns are used, referring to the concept of WOMAN. The meaning of the nouns and what context they are in determines the depiction of women in the lyrics. This may be further investigated, perhaps looking at what impact the negative depiction of women has on people’s view upon female gender.
Bibliography

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Secondary sources


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Accessed 19 March 2013

Accessed 20 February 2013

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Appendix 1

Song Lyrics

Rap

- Drake – The real her
- Jay Z – 99 problems
- Kanye West – Stronger
- Eminem – Stan
- Run DMC – Dumb Girl
- Snoop Dogg – Beautiful
- Ice Cube – Cave Bitch
- 50-Cent – Ayo Technology
- Wu-tang clan – Cobra Clutch
- Dr. Dre – Bitches Ain’t Shit
- Diddy – Baby Girl
- Notorious B.I.G – Big Booty Hoes
- LL Cool J – You and Me
- T.I – Do You Really Want Me?
- Outkast – Hey Ya
- 2Pac – Me and My Girlfriend
- 2 Chainz – Birthday song
- Nas – Big Girl
- Lupe Fiasco – Make Her Lost
- Lil Wayne – Private Dancer
Pop

- Justin Timberlake – Cry me a river
- Backstreet boys – Bye Bye Love
- ‘Nsync – For the Girl Who Has Everything
- Robbie Williams – Don’t do love
- Justin Bieber – Somebody to love
- Michael Jackson – Billie Jean
- Nick Lachey – I will still love you
- Aaron Carter – Crazy Little Party Girl
- One Direction – What makes you beautiful
- Take That – Babe
- Darin – Check you out
- Maroon 5 – Payphone
- Stevie Wonder – Angie girl
- The Beatles – Eight days a week
- Elton John – My Baby Loves Lovin’
- Westlife – Crying Girl
- Boyzone – Love You Anyway
- Enrique Iglesias – Hero
- David Archuleta – She’s Not You
- Bruno Mars – Just The Way You Are