



LUND
UNIVERSITY

The Aesthetics of Assault

- An intersectional analysis of sexual violence against teenage girls in
Swedish films from the 2000s and 2010s

Lund University
Centre for Languages and Literature
Master Program in Film and Media History
Supervisor: Elisabet Björklund
Seminar Date: 2023-06-02

Norah Jonsson
FIMT09, Spring 2023
Master's Thesis
30 ECTS

Abstract

Comparing contemporary legislation and social debates to films and TV-shows from the 2000s and 2010s, this study shows a change in approach to the subject of sexual assault from an intersectional angle. The analysis describes a more individual, neo-liberal angle in the early 2000s, and a more holistic and societal angle in the 2010s. With the intersectional approach, the study finds that whiteness, social class, and urban and rural aspects all effect the themes and narrative of sexual assault.

Foreword

In your hand (or on your computer), you are holding my master's thesis: *The Aesthetics of Assault – An intersectional analysis of sexual violence against teenage girls in Swedish films from the 2000s and 2010s*. This is a project that I have wanted to complete for several years now, and has finally been completed. Still, it would not be possible to do without the help of others. I would like to thank my supervisor, Elisabet Björklund, for her sage advice and input that has made this thesis more than I could ever hope it would be. I would also like to thank my family and friends who have supported me throughout, and I would especially like to thank my friend Lilly, whose encouragement and suggestions always put me on the right track.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Disposition	6
Method and Material.....	7
Research Field	12
Historical Context	18
Theory	25
Analysis	29
<i>Character Portrayal.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Aesthetics of Assault.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Relations and Reactions</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Revenge or Resignation</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Change and Continuity</i>	<i>47</i>
Conclusion	49
Bibliography	51

Introduction

For a long time now, my favourite genre of films has been 1980s and 1990s American teen films. Feel good stories about (somewhat) trivial teen problems is a topic that always puts me in a good mood. But a few years ago, I started to think about my own adolescent years and what Swedish teen-related films I saw growing up. I felt like there was a lot of sexual violence in the Swedish teen films, and they were not as feel good as their American counterparts. I remembered how we would watch *Säg att du älskar mig*, which includes a gang rape, at school and discuss teenage issues in the classroom.¹ At home, I'd watch *Freaky Friday* with my sister and dream of starting a band with my friends.² There seemed to exist a pattern and a difference.

By reading the dissertation of Heta Mulari, *New Feminsims, Gender Equality and Neoliberalism in Swedish Girl Films 1995 – 2006*, I could conclude that my gut-feeling was right: there was an influx of stories pertaining to sexual violence against teenage girls in the early 2000s.³ Mulari points to how the influx can be connected to several changes in other parts of society, and by comparing this to an international context of research, many changes in Western society impacted the popularity of stories about young women around this time. In Mulari's dissertation, though, I observed that there were a few aspects that could be deepened to further the conversation. Particularly, the issues of class, race and urban versus rural are not as fleshed out as issues of feminism when it comes to sexual violence in Swedish teen films. Additionally, the time-frame Mulari studied could be compared to films about teenage girls from a more contemporary time-frame to see how the subject has evolved alongside an ever-evolving society.

In the years following 2006 onward, Mulari shows how there has been a decline in films about teenage girls in Sweden.⁴ Still, from the early 2010s to 2018 there existed a public and political debate regarding sexual consent laws in Sweden, which could potentially make those who commit sexual assault easier to convict. A new consent law was ratified in 2018, and was predated by heavy public debate. These public debates and discussions, happened in tandem with new films, books and TV-series with sexual assault as a main theme. The ever-present changes in public opinion and cultural ideology is therefore an opportunity to compare two timeframes to see how the themes of sexual violence continues to change.

¹ Daniel Fridell, director. *Säg att du älskar mig*. Filmpool Nord, 2006.

² Mark Waters, director. *Freaky Friday*. Casual Friday Productions, 2003.

³ Heta Mulari, *New Feminisms, Gender Equality and Neoliberalism in Swedish Girl Films, 1995-2006* (PhD diss., University of Turku, 2015), 30.

⁴ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 221.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to analyse and compare stories of sexual assault against teenage girls in fictional, Swedish films. To add to this aim, the thesis will pursue a comparison between two timeframes, namely the 2000s and the mid- to late 2010s. During the first timeframe, Swedish society saw an influx of changes in law and cultural ideology connected to sexual assault and prostitution. During the second timeframe, laws pertaining to sexual consent changed, and society's connection to sexual assault was heavily debated. By comparing these two eras, a greater understanding of Swedish society's view of adolescent girls can be compared, as these kinds of stories can act as a timestamp of contemporary ideals.

To represent the 2000s, the films *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig* will be studied in this thesis.⁵ The choice of these two films is due to their location which heavily depends on using their schools as a backdrop, and therefore can include many different aspects of reactions to assault charges. To represent the 2010s, the film *Flocken* was chosen as it is also about sexual violence against a teenage girl at school.⁶ This is also true about the novel *Björnstad* (Author: Fredrik Backman) that was published in 2016, and a made into a mini-series also called *Björnstad* in 2020.⁷ This mini-series is the second choice to represent the 2010s. With the films from the 2000s, and the film and mini-series from the late 2010s heavily focusing on sexual assault, a comparison is possible between the two decades.

To be able to adhere to the aim of this thesis, the research questions are guided by an intersectional angle: In what ways are race, social class, and urban and rural society represented in Swedish films about sexual assault against teenage girls? And what, if anything, has changed in the depictions between the 2000s and 2010s alongside the contemporary legislative changes and public debate?

Disposition

A short description of each chapter will follow here. The chapter *Method and Material* will present and describe the method of analysis that is used to pinpoint how sections of the material can be studied. This chapter also presents the material used to represent each era of study.

The following chapter, *Research Field*, will present the research field to give an overview of research relevant to this thesis. First, an international context will be presented to then move

⁵ Teresa Fabik, director. *Hip hip hora!*. Filmlance International AB, 2004.

⁶ Beata Gårdeler, director. *Flocken*. 2afilm, 2015.

⁷ Peter Grönlund, director. *Björnstad*. Filmlance international AB, 2020.

into a Swedish context of research. Research pertaining to teen films will first be presented, then research on race and social class on Swedish film, and lastly a rural context is added.

With this study being both textual and sociological, a chapter called *Historical Context* is necessary to place the films in a broader context than simply being teen films about sexual violence. In this chapter, a short history of legislation in Sweden that is connected to sexual violence is firstly presented. These legislative changes are also placed in a context of time where the films studied were released. Then, a presentation of Swedish public debate at the times of the materials' release is discussed to further contextualise Swedish society at these times. Lastly, a distribution discussion pertaining to Swedish Schools is presented to show other aspects of the production of Swedish film overall.

In the *Theory* chapter, the terminology used in the analysis will be defined. As stated above, the main focus will be social class, geographical differences, and race, which calls for the theory of intersectionality, as to provide the tools to analyse these concepts in tandem.

The *Analysis* chapter is divided into five sections. Every section will discuss all four films as needed for the analysis in accordance with the various theories presented above. With the thesis being of an intersectional nature, and utilising the interconnectedness between fact (legislation and public debate) and fiction (the audio-visual material); this weaving of theories becomes necessary to pinpoint themes across time. Still, to compartmentalise the different aspects of study, chapters are used in an almost chronological way. The first section, Character Portrayal, focuses on the codifying of the main characters, as to place them in a larger context of contemporary ideals. The second section, Aesthetics of Assault, discusses the way the assault scenes are presented and used in the narrative. The third section, Relationships and Reactions, aims to place the material in a larger context of how the main characters' close relations and society reacts to the crime. The fourth section, Revenge or Resignation, discusses how the stories end, and what that might signify. The fifth and last section, Change and Continuity, aims to focus on the public debate and legislation that surrounded the films, trying to pinpoint differences and similarities between the eras that might be connected to a changing culture.

Lastly, a chapter named *Conclusion* will both tie the study together, as well as present suggestions for further research.

Method and Material

In this study, the films and TV-series in question are interesting from both a textual and a cultural point of view. Rather than looking for symbolism attached to the director, the search is

geared towards the materials' mirroring of contemporary society and public debate. This means that the material is viewed as part of public debate, and therefore gives and takes from each other.

In her book *The Aftermath of Feminism: gender, culture and social change* (2009), Angela McRobbie analyses "[...] popular culture and its intersections with popular debate."⁸ By comparing popular culture to social, economic and political changes aimed at young women in Britain around the 1990s and 2000s, McRobbie argues that all of this points to a individualistic, neo-liberal social change, that contrasts the Marxist feminism of the 1970s.⁹ This thesis aims to use the same method of analysis through intersectional analysis and interaction between popular culture and public debate. This study is not only comparing different eras of production of films about teenage girls, but also to compares them to their contemporary public debate. This is in line with McRobbie's method of interactional analysis of society and popular culture. The changes to this method lies within the material and approach. By looking at, and comparing contemporary public debate to the portrayal of teenage girls and sexual assault, the analysis can point to how teenage girls (and society at large) "should" behave in regards to sexual assault.

To add to this method of analysis, the approach in this text is intersectional in the sense that the analysis will not only focus on the portrayal of teenage girls and sexual assault, but also aspects of social class, race, and age, to point to potential reasons for differences and similarities across the material. A deeper discussion of this term is presented in the *Theory* chapter.

But first, a definition of the concept of teen film, as the concept is not unanimously used, but will be appropriated for this study. In an American context, Timothy Shary defines American teen film as films where the most prominent characters are between the ages of twelve and twenty, and, although they can be divided into subgenres such as school films and horror films, hold no other genre definer.¹⁰ In a Swedish context, Tommy Gustafsson defines Swedish teen films (My translation from Swedish: ungdomsfilmer) as films primarily targeted towards teenagers.¹¹ Finnish scholar Heta Mulari uses the term girl film to point to how teen films about girls in Sweden between 1995 and 2006 were politically motivated and mediated.¹² Comparatively, the different researchers use different terminology in conjunction with their

⁸ Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. SAGE, 2009. 150.

⁹ McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 40; 59.

¹⁰ Timothy Shary, *Journal of Film and Video*; "Film Genres and the Image of Youth", (Spring 2003): 55: 1, 39.

¹¹ Tommy Gustafsson, "Ett steg på vägen mot en ny jämlikhet?: Könrelationer och stereotyper i ung svensk ungdomsfilm på 2000-talet," in: Hedling, Erik, and Ann-Kristin Wallengren. *Solskenslandet: Svensk Film På 2000-Talet*, 2006. 171.

¹² Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 14.

how society and the context of their research interacts with films about teenagers. In this thesis, the term teen film seems a bit too narrow and carries too many American connotations.

The material from the 2000s does share many similarities with their American counterparts, which could potentially place them within the genre of teen film. The main reasons being that they are films about teenage girls, for teenagers. The newer material, on the other hand, does not completely adhere to those rules. These stories encompass both the teenage victim, but also gives in-depth insights into others who are affected by the unfolding events. The viewer also gets to know the rapist, and the parents of both victim and assailant. Other adult characters are also included to tell a story that more so involves a whole society to tell the story. Therefore, the material from the 2010s cannot fully be described as about teenagers and for teenagers. It is not only the characters in both *Flocken* and *Björnstad* that define this, but *Björnstad* carries another level of distance from a teenage audience. *Björnstad* was, as mentioned earlier, first released as a novel by author Fredrik Backman. This author, who has written several popular novels about adult characters, is arguably not seen as a young-adult author. For example, the target group for the novel *Björnstad* is tagged as (My translation): “Adult, Educator, Parent, Young Adult 16+”, at Swedish libraries.¹³ Still, as the teenage characters whose stories centre around sexual violence is so prominent, (and my personal experience as a teacher of using the novel *Björnstad* at an upper secondary school in Sweden) the material is used here. With that said, there is still a reason to use a shorthand to refer to the material in a collective way.

So, to broaden the scope, and allow for two media (film and TV-series) to be studied in this thesis, the term “teen film” will be appropriated for this study. Although the above discussion shows that the genre definition of teen film is complicated and culturally implicated, this study is not strictly a genre study, and therefore can take some liberties to streamline the analysis. To constantly refer back to how the material is not completely targeted towards teenagers; not entirely about teenagers; and not all distributed as a 90-minute film will only confuse and steer away from the core of the aim. Therefore, the term teen film will be used to cover the scope of the material in the analysis.

Speaking of audio-visual material, the demarcation of material for this thesis needs to be specified. As will be further presented in the *Historical Context*, the choice of timeframe relies heavily on changes in legislation and public debate that occurred around the same time as the films were released. In the 1990s the Kvinnofridsakten was ratified, which brought sexual

¹³ Borås bibliotek. ”Björnstadtrilogin”. (N/A). <https://bibliotek.boras.se/sv/review/bj%C3%B6rnstadstrilogin>

violence to the public debate, and can then be connected to films about sexual violence against teenage girls in the early 2000s. In the 2010s, there were several attempts at changing the sexual violence laws to also incorporate laws of consent. Alongside this, the public debate surrounding teenage girls was also affected by the infamous rape scandal in Bjästa, and its connection to the concept of rape culture. Once again, there is a connection between public debate, legislation, and films about sexual assault against teenage girls.

With the two time-frames set at 2000s and 2010s, the material chosen from each decade was deemed useful if it was audio-visual; had teenage girls in school as main characters; and was about sexual assault. By own personal memory, and year-by-year study of svenskfilmdatabas.se, a few films about teenage girls and sexual assault could be found and represent their timeframes for this study.

By choosing films where the teenage girls were still in school, a microcosm of society is clearer than if the teenage girls have finished school. For example, the film *Vingar av Glas* could be used for this study as it is about a teenage girl who is almost raped by her cousin.¹⁴ But, by not having the characters still in school, some of the societal aspects that this study wants to dig into are less pronounced. The intersectional aspects this study is focused on, are easier to show with characters who are still in school, as the teenage girls are not only subjected to the reactions of their family, but also to the cross-section of students at school and grown-ups who are connected those students. From the 2000s, the films *Hip hip hora!*, and *Säg att du älskar mig* were chosen for analysis. These are two films about teenage girls at school who are subjected to sexual assault by boys from their own school. Because of these reasons, the material fit the bill. From the 2010s, the film *Flocken* and the TV-series *Björnstad* were chosen as they, too, are about teenage girls who are subjected to sexual assault by a boy from their respective school.

Hip Hip Hora! is a film about Sofie, a girl who is about to start year seven and turn 13 years old. The story follows Sofie during the first weeks at a new school as she is subjected to sexual assault, and the consequences this brings. As Sofie loses her close friends, and gains another friend, her story comes to an end after she confronts her main assaulter and embarrasses him in front of everyone at school.

Säg att du älskar mig is the story about Fatou, a teenage girl who gets raped by two boys from her school. The rape takes place early in the story, and leads the viewer into the following days and weeks where Fatou at first wants to keep the rape a secret, but eventually reports it to

¹⁴ Reza Bagher, director. *Vingar av glas*. Chimney Pot, 2000.

the police. The viewer follows Fatou's journey from the rape to the hearings at court, conviction of her rapists, and lastly her transferring of schools due to unrest and bullying caused by polarisation pertaining to the rape.

Flocken is a story about Jenny who reports a boy from school for sexually assaulting her in a school bathroom. The story is (arguably) loosely based on the rape that occurred in Bjästa in northern Sweden, and therefore includes the conviction of the rapist alongside the community's support for the boy despite his conviction. These plotlines follow the timeline of that happened in real life in Bjästa.¹⁵ At the end of the film, Jenny contemplates suicide (but does not carry through with it), and the boy rapes another girl.

Björnstad is a mini-series of five episodes released in 2020, that are based on a novel of the same name from 2016. This story follows several characters, but mainly focuses on Maya, the daughter of the "main" family of the series, who is raped by a boy from school. In the story, the rapist is Kevin, a popular boy who has given hope to a whole community by playing ice hockey quite well, and therefore helping to bring back glory to a sleepy small-town. In *Björnstad* the story takes another path than in *Flocken*, as the charges against Kevin are dropped, and the viewer instead follows the inner turmoil of Kevin when he starts to regret his actions. At the end, Maya threatens to kill Kevin, but doesn't carry through it. Maya moves on and Kevin leaves *Björnstad* as he is drafted into the Swedish Hockey League (SHL).

A few concessions must be taken into account with this in mind. The first is that all the material except for one, are films (partially) distributed in cinema and therefore spans between an hour and a half, to about two hours. The exception to this is *Björnstad* that is a five-part TV-series released through the streaming site HBO. Because of this, the audio-visual material will at most times be referred to as "material" or "films" to not have to specify that the material consists of both films and a TV-series each time the material is brought up. The other concession also pertains to *Björnstad* as it was *not* released during the 2010s. With a premiere in 2020 it falls outside this timespan. The reason for its inclusion in this thesis is the connection to its original distribution as a book. In 2016, Fredrik Backman published the novel *Björnstad*, which then was produced as a TV-series in 2019 that was released in 2020. With the novel published a year after *Flocken* was released, the TV-series can arguably still be connected to the 2010s as the story has its origins in the mid-2010s.

Another reason for choosing these films as material has to do with how a connection to Swedish society also can be presented for them. *Hip hip hora!* was written and directed by

¹⁵ Jan Guillou, "Jag skulle gärna se att *Flocken* faller", *Aftonbladet*, September 15, 2015. <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/0EgqLg/jag-skulle-garna-se-att-flocken-falls>

Teresa Fabik, who in an interview says that the film was inspired by her own, and other young women's experiences at Swedish upper secondary school.¹⁶ Director Daniel Fridell says that the inspiration for *Säg att du älskar mig* came from seeing boys groping young girls at another film he directed.¹⁷ The creators of *Flocken* claims that their inspiration was of a general kind, although this has been widely disputed. The likeness the film carries to the real events of the sexual assaults at Bjästa, are strikingly similar, per both family members of the events, and journalists who compared the timeline and incidents to the film.¹⁸ According to the author Fredrik Backman, the sexual violence in his novel *Björnstad* was inspired by a plethora of events he had heard of.¹⁹

With the material collected, the textual analysis consisted of studying the material to see how themes, mise-en-scène, narrative, camera angles and dialogue could be connected to what the filmmakers wanted to present with each film. By looking at the material from an intersectional angle, the analysis is broadened to find connections between, for example, social class and portrayal of sexual assault, and race and portrayal of sexual assault. By connecting and contrasting this to contemporary public debate and legislation, the aim of seeing the intertextuality of popular culture and societal culture can be discerned.

Research Field

As stated in the introduction, analysing the combination of teen film and sexual violence is what this thesis will focus on. Still, when trying to carve out the research field, a more international context is of value to see what happens beyond Sweden's borders. As the various search terms such as "sexual violence" and "rape" in connection to "teen film" were utilized, it is of no surprise that most of the studies had an American or British context. In a British context, Angela McRobbie stated in 2006 that teenage girls are marginalized in research pertaining to popular culture.²⁰ Also, McRobbie's research from 2009 emphasises how popular culture manages to adapt to every part of society and in some ways fools us into believing that we are

¹⁶ Teresa Fabik, "Jag kände mig alltid som ett ufo," *Aftonbladet*, May 1, 2004.

¹⁷ Anna Hedelius, "Säg att du älskar mig," Svenska filminstitutet, (N/A).

¹⁸ Guillou, "Jag skulle gärna se," 2015.

¹⁹ Unknown, "Författarintervju: Fredrik Backman," *Midnattsord*, November 3, 2016.

²⁰ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, "Girls and Subcultures," in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, edited by Stuart Hall, and Tony Jefferson. 177-189. 2006. 177.

in control of our common sense.²¹ This then creates opportunities for popular culture to affect, for example, young women by making characters and narratives synonymous to how they should behave in society.²² Although McRobbie's research is not about sexual violence against teenage girls on film, the research points to how cultural artefacts and society are in constant conversation; one affecting the other, and vice versa.

Still, there are some international discussions about sexual violence on screen – such as an article that points to how the teenagers in British soap opera *Hollyoaks* have been subjected to anything from bullying to sexual violence throughout the years.²³ In Australia, the #MeToo-movement (discussed in Historical Context chapter) made film scholar Alexandra Heller-Nicholas revisit the Australian 1980s teen film *Shame* about a gang-rape, to place its impact in a new context.²⁴ In an American context, the research mainly discusses teen films and sexual violence in the context of horror films or teen TV-drama.²⁵ This American connection between sexual violence and horror films is so tightly connected, that it is even carried over into a study of the film *Precious*.²⁶ The film *Precious* is the story about teenage girl Precious, who is repeatedly sexually violated by her father, and verbally and physically assaulted by her mother – and would not normally be read as a horror film.²⁷ In an international context this subject therefore seems to be less prominent in both teen films produced and teen film studies conducted.

To add to the early 2000s postfeminist research, the book from 2001 by Sarah Projansky: *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* adds to the research of sexual violence. This book primarily focuses on Western society's depiction of rape from the 1980s until the book's release. Although, as Projansky argues, there is a timelessness to the overall depiction of rape, as the narrative is guided by historical factors that include national and cultural differences. Projansky states that the depiction of rape is used in many ways that include

²¹ McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 12.

²² McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 35.

²³ Robin Parker, "Championing the teen voice." *Broadcast*, October 24, 2013. <http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/championing-teen-voice/docview/1444656696/se-2> ; Phil Redmond, creator. *Hollyoaks*. Channel 4, 1995 –.

²⁴ Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, "Shame," *Metro and Screen Education Magazines*. 2019. 115.; Steve Jodrell, director. *Shame*. Barron Entertainment, 1987.

²⁵ Susan Berridge, "Teen Heroine TV: Narrative Complexity and Sexual Violence in Female-Fronted Teen Drama Series," *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 11:4, 2013, 477-496; Sol Neely, "Ruined Abjection and Allegory in *Deadgirl*," *Screen Bodies*, 1:2, (Winter 2016), 4-24.; Richard Nowell, "'For girls': Hollywood, The Date Movie Market, and Early-1980s Teen Sex Comedies," *Post Script*, 34:1 (Fall 2014), 16-34.

²⁶ Charlene Rager, "Monstrous Mother, Incestuous Father, and Terrorized Teen: Reading *Precious* as a Horror Film," *Journal of Film and Video*, 67:1, (Spring 2015), 30-45.

²⁷ Lee Daniels, director. *Precious*. Lionsgate, 2009.

both themes and social issues.²⁸ In her introduction, Projansky presents the feminist movement from the 1970s that included movements such as “Speak Out,” that encouraged women to talk about their experiences with sexual violence.²⁹ As Projansky points to previous research, it is shown that in an American context, rape has been dealt with differently depending on the era and movements that affect what is seen as rape or not. This has led to myths that include, for example, believing that the victims are lying, believing that the way women dress or behave will cause the rape, that the victim and the perpetrator are always strangers, that only morally depraved men rape, and that African-American men are more likely to rape than white men are.³⁰ Projansky states that her research is not meant to focus on genres and their depictions of rape, but rather points to systems of media and representation, and the culture that media creates alongside society.³¹ Projansky also points to the paradox of the depiction of rape, as the depiction of such stories want to end rape but inadvertently perpetuate the discourse of rape by portraying it on screen.³²

In a Swedish research context, Tommy Gustafsson argues that the film *Fucking Åmål* changed the way Swedish teen films were produced, as it was a film that not only was targeted towards adolescents, but also produced by young people.³³ Other new production aspects were the believable dialogue and contemporary setting. The main reasons for this change in production, Gustafsson explains, has a lot to do with the decentralising of film production in Sweden, that afforded more young female, and immigrant filmmakers to create stories from their own world. Gustafsson points to how the Swedish teen films from the 2000s often centre around sexual assault towards teenage girls, criticism towards the sexualised public space, and love across ethnic borders. Still, he comments that the portrayal of gender in these films perpetuates stereotypes, that in many ways mimics the genre conventions of American teen films.³⁴

Another aspect of research into teen films comes from Finnish scholar Heta Mulari. Her dissertation: *New Feminsims, Gender Equality and Neoliberalism in Swedish Girl Films 1995-2006*, has provided a contextual Swedish framework for this thesis. With her work, the overview of the 2000s could be established to inspire my comparative study of the 2000s and the 2010s. As mentioned in the introduction, Mulari presents evidence of an increase in

²⁸ Sarah Projansky, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (NYU Press, 2001). 3.

²⁹ Projansky, *Watching Rape*, 7.

³⁰ Projansky, *Watching Rape*, 8.

³¹ Projansky, *Watching Rape*, 17.

³² Projansky, *Watching Rape*, 19.

³³ Lukas Moodysson, director. *Fucking Åmål* (English title: *Show Me Love*). Memfis Film, 1998.

³⁴ Gustafsson, ”Ett steg på vägen,” 172; 174; 192.

production of films about teenage girls in Sweden in the 1990s and 2000s, which she connects to many different areas of Swedish society. Mulari points to an international interest in girl power films, that inspired Swedish filmmakers to take the opportunity to jump on the trend. The new legislations pertaining to sexual violence, and decentralisation of production, are also presented as reasons for the influx. The last thing that Mulari presents as a reason for the increase of films about teenage girls in Sweden has to do with policy changes of production due to Sweden joining the European Union, which made the stories of women, by women pushed to the forefront of production priorities.³⁵

With no large changes pertaining to decentralisation or policies in film production in the 2010s, the main argument for the use of films from the 2010s comes from public debate and legislation, which also will be further explained later on. Still, Mulari points to changes in construction of girlhood from 2006 to the publication of her dissertation in 2015 that is mainly connected to social media, and its impact on society. Also, Mulari points to a decline in Swedish films about teenage girls between 2006 and 2015. In her research, Mulari found that the main themes in Swedish films about teenage girls were: “interpretations of new feminist and postfeminist girlhood in conjunction with girl power”; “youth melodramas about girls’ harassment and vulnerability”; and “girl activists and outcasts” in connection to documentary style and social media. With this dissertation, the films *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig* have been placed in a context of research pertaining to teen film and sexual violence.³⁶

The films *Flocken* and *Björnstad* are also part of a Swedish research field, although so far only to the level of bachelor theses.³⁷ Lovisa Dahne and Alexi Matthis use the film *Flocken* (2015) as an example in their analysis of Swedish films and their narrative structures.³⁸ Ella Nilsson compares the TV-series *Björnstad* to the TV-series *13 Reasons Why* and the way the Swedish and American series present rape, rape culture, intersectionality and gender.³⁹

Another study that is relevant is Hynek Pallas’ research of Whiteness in Swedish film between 1989 and 2010. As Pallas states, the research of Whiteness on film is multifaceted and needs to be studied from many angles to deconstruct it. Pallas states that the changes in Whiteness on Swedish film connects to changes in Swedish society, and therefore the building

³⁵ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 16; 27; 30; 9.1

³⁶ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 219; 221.

³⁷ Lovisa Dahne and Alexi Matthis, “Det klassiska berättandet i det moderna Sverige: En kvalitativ analys av den moderna svenskproducerade filmens användning av det klassiska berättandets dramaturgi,” (BA, University of Dalarna, 2016); Ella Nilsson, “”The Following episode contains scenes that some may find disturbing” – Representationen av våldtäkt i *13 Reasons Why* och *Björnstad*.” (BA, University of Linköping, 2021).

³⁸ Dahne and Matthis, “Det klassiska berättandet.”

³⁹ Nilsson, “This Episode.”; Brian Yorkey, creator. *13 Reasons Why*. July Moon Productions, 2017.

of what contemporary society sees as "the Swedish nation." Pallas points to how in Swedish film, your race plays into how conflicts are presented. For non-white people, the conflicts are presented as happening because of their race, and is something impossible to change or make better. On the other hand, if you are white, the conflict is presented as circumstantial, and something they cannot help but happen to them – which will be further presented below.⁴⁰

With his analysis into social class and race, Pallas also points to differences between white, and non-white characters. Pallas describes how working-class problems are a privilege for white people. As mentioned above, this connects to how white people are presented as not being able to help that they are poor, and when non-white people are presented as being poor it is shown as part of who they are. For example, with the societal changes in Sweden alongside the timeframe of Pallas research, he points to how housing segregation on film has gone from reflecting social class to reflecting racial segregation. Lastly, it is pointed out that in Swedish film, the norm is that terms like class, culture and ethnicity are a lot less clear when it comes to white middle-class people.⁴¹

This unclear white middle-class presentation on film is also mentioned in Heta Mulari's dissertation from 2015. With the exception of *Säg att du älskar mig*, where the main character is of working class and non-white, Mulari points to how in girl films from the 1990s and 2000s the "perspective of social class is less explicit than in their Anglo-American counterparts."⁴² Most of the films studied in Mulari's dissertation are about white teenage girls, and therefore can be seen as following Pallas' theories of white middle-class less clear than other social groups on Swedish film.

As the films in this study have moved from urban in the 2000s to Northern rural in the 2010s, research of representation of the Northern part of Sweden on film needs to be presented. The research field pertaining to Northerners rarely discusses the subject of teen films and sexual violence. Still, by placing this study in a context of urban and rural differences, it can point to representation of different parts of Sweden on Swedish film. With *Flocken* and *Björnstad* being set in Northern Sweden, this aspect can add to the discussion.

The decentralising of production in the 1990s was also meant to increase stories about the regions, and therefore was meant to sell the region, Ann-Kristin Wallengren writes in the

⁴⁰ Hynek Pallas, *Vithet i svensk spelfilm 1989-2010*. PhD diss., (Stockholm University, 2011). 32; 46; 123; 123-124.

⁴¹ Pallas, *Vithet*, 124; 128; 133; 158.

⁴² Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 111.

anthology *Solskenslandet*.⁴³ This was to counteract the centralised film production that had incurred with the 1963 reform that placed virtually all Swedish production in Stockholm.⁴⁴ So how was regional production selling the area? From the 1920s to the 1960s rural Sweden was represented as an idyllic place in contrast to the sinful and soulless urban areas.⁴⁵ The changes that came with the decentralising of film production ushered in stories in the 1990s and 2000s that, in contrast to the first half of the 20th century, painted rural Swedes as stupid and backwards.⁴⁶ But now the rural stories were no longer about farmers, but rather about stagnating on or climbing the social class ladder. Those who left the small town journeyed up the social class ladder from a working class environment to a middle class life.⁴⁷ This is something Mulari also points to in her research. Mulari states that teenage girls on film in the 2000s could be the symbol of social change by moving from countryside and working-class to city and middle-class.⁴⁸

Wallengren's text may be from the early 2000s, and thus may seem somewhat dated, but the field of studying Northerner Swedes on film is still limited. The newest material I could find was Madeleine Eriksson's dissertation from 2010. And in her research she used the film *Jägarna* from 1996.⁴⁹ Still, with a dissertation at hand, the portrayal of rural versus urban can be used here. In her research, Eriksson points to the representation in *Jägarna* produces "geographical generalisations" that are part of an "internal orientalism" that wrongfully portrays the northern part of Sweden as homogenous in the sense of it being an old-fashioned place that is conservative, rural and lower-class, that is contrasted by the modern and progressive Stockholm and Southern Sweden.⁵⁰ These Northerners are presented as stereotypical white, working-class, where living off welfare is seen as part of their own regional culture. This is, in this film, contrasted to Stockholm that is presented as everything that Northern Sweden is not. With Northern Sweden spanning over 60% of the landmass of Sweden, these kinds of generalisations stir up discontent with its inhabitants in real life.⁵¹

In contrast to Eriksson's research where she argues that Northerners are presented as stereotypical white, working-class that have "chosen" to live on welfare and therefore made

⁴³ Ann-Kristin Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur: bilden av landsbygdens folk," in: Hedling, Erik, and Ann-Kristin Wallengren. *Solskenslandet: Svensk Film På 2000-Talet*, 2006. 51-79. 51.

⁴⁴ Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur," 51.

⁴⁵ Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur," 52.

⁴⁶ Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur," 54.

⁴⁷ Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur," 55.

⁴⁸ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 227.

⁴⁹ Kjell Sundvall, director. *Jägarna* (English translation: *The Hunters*). FilmTeknik, 1996.

⁵⁰ Madeleine Eriksson, *(Re)producing a periphery – Popular representations of the Swedish North*, PhD diss., (Umeå University, 2010). 66.

⁵¹ Eriksson, *(Re)producing a periphery*, 66; 69; 74.

this part of their culture, Hynek Pallas might somewhat disagree. In his chapter *Tillbaka till naturen* (118-123, My translation: *Back to Nature*), the focus lies within white men returning to "Nature" in the films he analyses. The films presented can be seen as expressions of the anxiety Swedish men feel about changes to society where their identity as white men is destabilised, where the representation of "Nature" gives them a refuge. Interestingly, the films Pallas mentions are not placed in the context of Northern Sweden. He, instead, compares the general representations of urban and rural without much connection to the discrepancies between working-class Northerners, and middle-class Southerners that Eriksson mentions in her research.⁵²

This is by no means an exhaustive stipulation of the research fields relevant to this study. Still, the studies and articles presented have pointed to an international and a domestic overview where this master's thesis of teen films and sexual violence might fit in.

Historical Context

Legislation

A phrase used in both research and everyday life is: nothing ever happens in a vacuum. The same can be said of the two periods which this study has pinpointed. The early 2000s was a time in which the public debate and legislation intertwined to perhaps push forward the creation of films about Swedish teenage girls and their struggles.

In 1998, the Violence Against Women Act (Kvinnofrid 1998) was approved in Swedish parliament, which resulted in new legislation. For example, the penal value of domestic violence changed, and now included the definition: severe violation of a woman's integrity (My translation from Swedish: grov kvinnofridskränkning). Also, the laws of prostitution changed, criminalising only the buyer of sexual services, and not the seller.⁵³ These legal changes were implemented in tandem with a political and public debate that had been ongoing since the 1960s in Sweden, where gender-egalitarian (My translation from: jämställdhet) movements emerged. With new surges in debates in the late 1980s and 1990s, new laws were implemented and public debate followed suit.⁵⁴

⁵² Pallas, *Vithet*, 121; 122.

⁵³ Regeringen, "Kvinnofrid – Proposition 1997/98:55," *Sveriges Riksdag*. 1998.
https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/proposition/kvinnofrid_GL0355

⁵⁴ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 122.

To further explore these films through comparison, the contemporary societal influence can be studied from the 2010s as well. A society is ever-evolving and will often change laws according to norms and values the contemporary society demands or needs. In Sweden, the debate about sexual consent has been prevalent for many years. To compare this notion to rape, the legislation in Sweden has focused on the violence of trying to coerce someone to sleep with you. With consent, the situation considers that the absence of a yes becomes a no. The first attempts to legislate sexual consent happened in 2010, but would not be voted through parliament until 2018, with the prospective laws processed by the government from 2016 to 2018. These big changes in legislation of course brought debate to the public and media, with the two sides debating whether the new laws would work or even make a difference. Statistics show that just a year after the new laws were ratified, the convictions of rape increased by 75% between 2017 (before the new law of consent was in use), and 2019 (one year after the laws had changed).⁵⁵

Public Debate

In public debate in Sweden in the 1990s and 2000s, feminism, equality, racism and queer theory emerged with a new, neoliberal agenda.⁵⁶ With an increasing interest in gender studies worldwide, the theories travelled throughout the academic world, which influenced both Swedish scholars and writers. Internationally, new academic theories started to take place in the 1980s and shape a new way of addressing feminism. Researcher Judith Butler published their theories on gender in 1990, which became a book that influenced Swedish gender studies, as well as a public debate surrounding queer theory.⁵⁷ Race and gender were also prolific in the feminist debate in the 1980s and 1990s, with bell hooks *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*⁵⁸ released in 1981, and Kimberlé Crenshaw's coining of the term *intersectionality* in 1989.⁵⁹ Still, the issue of racism has affected the speed and scope of feminist inclusivity from the 1970s onward, as bell hooks states that her work was finished long before it was published, but that the manuscript was ignored by publishing houses until white women had decided that race was an important debate.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Stina Holmberg and Lars Lewenhagen. "Den nya samtyckeslagen i praktiken," *Brottsförebyggande rådet*. 2020. <https://bra.se/publikationer/arkiv/publikationer/2020-06-15-den-nya-samtyckeslagen-i-praktiken.html>

⁵⁶ Mulari, *New Feminisms*.

⁵⁷ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 48.

⁵⁸ bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, Boston: South End Press, 1981.

⁵⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139 – 168. 1989.

⁶⁰ Projansky, *Watching Rape*, 15.

In Sweden in 1999 the anthology *Fittstim* was published and is a timestamp on gender and queer debates in Sweden from the late 1990s. The Swedish magazine *Bang* celebrated ten years in 2001 and looked back on a changing landscape where intersectional issues had been brought to the forefront over the years.⁶¹ Both examples show a landscape where feminist issues were prominent enough to warrant an anthology that became popular in Sweden, as well as a self-reflection of changes that had happened in recent years.

As mentioned before, Mulari states that fewer teen films about girls and girl problems were produced between 2006 and 2015.⁶² Still, this does not mean that the discussions about sexual violence disappeared alongside it. In 2010, Malin Nauwreck wrote an article about where the lines are drawn when it comes to sexual violence, pointing to the then popular Swedish hashtag: #PrataOmDet (My translation: #TalkAboutIt).⁶³ Five years later, in 2015, Swedish scholar Ebba Witt-Brattström reviews and discusses both the hashtag and article from a Swedish, historical perspective regarding sexual consent and sexual “grey areas.” In this text, Witt-Brattström points to how the issues of consent have shown up alongside every larger feminist movement since the 1970s.⁶⁴

Another prolific event that was both a Swedish matter and an international matter, was the rape allegations against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. In 2010, Assange was reported for the crime, and the Swedish public prosecutor dropped the case in 2017 due to the passing of time had made the case less trustworthy.⁶⁵ This case sparked international discussions pertaining to different nations’ legislation concerning sexual consent. Apart from the Swedish woman’s report that Assange raped her whilst she was sleeping, she also reported that Assange failed to use a condom despite former agreement to do so (known as “stealthing”), which became a precedent for the act of “stealthing” being defined as rape under British law.⁶⁶

The year 2017 was also somewhat defined by a feminist movement - but this time on social media. Tarana Burke is an American activist who created the hashtag #MeToo in 2006

⁶¹ Ia Grenberg, ”Nu börjar det!,” *Bang*, 1/2001, 7 – 9.

⁶² Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 221.

⁶³ Malin Nauwreck, ”Var går gränsen,” in: Klara Arnberg, Pia Laskar and Fia Sundevall, *Sexualpolitiska nyckeltexter*, Stockholm: Leopard, 2015. 434 – 435.

⁶⁴ Ebba Witt-Brattström, ”Feministiska perspektiv på sexualpolitik,” in: Klara Arnberg, Pia Laskar and Fia Sundevall, *Sexualpolitiska nyckeltexter*, Stockholm: Leopard, 2015, 436 – 444.

⁶⁵ Åklagarmyndigheten. ”The Assange Matter,” *Åklagarmyndigheten*, 2019.

<https://www.aklagare.se/en/media/press-service/the-assange-matter/>

⁶⁶ England and Wales High Court. “[2011] EWHC 2849”, *England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court) Decisions*, 2011. [https://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2011/2849.html&query=\(title:\(+Assange+\)\)](https://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2011/2849.html&query=(title:(+Assange+))); Matthew Scott, “Britain’s Consent Laws are a Mess,” *The Spectator*, 2020. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/britain-s-consent-laws-are-a-mess/>

to gather voices of sexual violence to share their experiences, and to show the amount of people affected.⁶⁷ This hashtag that was more local at first, drew global attention in 2017 when actresses in Hollywood used the hashtag to point to toxic environments in Hollywood. Spreading all over the world, the hashtag reached Sweden and became part of public debate of sexual consent. With these feminist winds blowing, the Swedish prime minister referred to the hashtag when handing in the proposition of new consent laws in October 2017.⁶⁸ What the hashtag showed was a societal issue connected to rape and consent. Those who wanted new consent laws pointed to a rape-culture that flows through all facets of society and contribute to the acceptance of women's bodies not belonging to themselves.

Other than laws being changed, public debate also entered around cases of rape that pointed to rape culture. Rape culture is a concept that has somewhat disputed origins other than being coined sometime during the feminist wave of the 1970s.⁶⁹ The concept is defined by how rape is normalised and justified throughout society and claims that rape culture is perpetuated through the inequalities of gender, race and sexuality.⁷⁰ Many things are embedded in this concept, including jokes about rape, excusing young boys when they harass their female classmates, asking girls what clothes they wore when they were raped, and if they were drunk when they were raped, etc.⁷¹ Nickie D. Phillips writes that although an old concept, rape culture as an established way of describing society and its perpetuation of rape has been part of public discourse in America since 2013.⁷² Phillips also writes that popular culture influences the way society treats sexual violence, and that the discussion of rape culture has become part of the broader discussion of sexual violence, where social media has helped the concept to reach broader audiences than academia, where it has been used for a long time.⁷³ Since this concept is about describing how sexual violence is embedded in every facet of society, it encapsulates everything from sexist remarks to legislation connected to the way contemporary society views sexual violence.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Wikipedia, "Tarana Burke," *Wikipedia*, (N/A). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarana_Burke

⁶⁸ Edgar Mannheimer, "Regeringen lägger fram förslag om samtyckeslag," *SVT nyheter*, 2017. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/uppgifter-regeringen-infor-samtyckeslagen>

⁶⁹ Nickie D. Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines: Rape Culture in Popular Media*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, 5.

⁷⁰ Un Women. "16 Ways You Can Stand Against Rape Culture," *UN Women*, 2019.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/11/compilation-ways-you-can-stand-against-rape-culture>

⁷¹ Un Women, "16 Ways."

⁷² Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines*, 2.

⁷³ Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines*, 4.

⁷⁴ Phillips, *Beyond Blurred Lines*, 11.

In Sweden, the concept of rape culture (Swedish: våldtäktskultur), was part of the public debate that happened alongside the legislation changes of the 1990s and 2000s.⁷⁵ This concept, arguably somewhat changed during the 2010s. With debate articles discussing men and their participation in rape culture in the early 2000s,⁷⁶ a more holistic approach can be discerned in the 2010s. For example, in 2014, the blog *Vardagsrasismen* (My translation: Everyday racism) wrote about women consciously and unconsciously taking part in perpetuating rape culture.⁷⁷ In 2010, public debate in Sweden regarding rape culture included the story of a rape in Bjästa. The girl raped was ostracized from her community, and famously not believed even though the boy was convicted of the crime. The societal impact of this situation was, for example, publicly discussed when the boy was invited to the last day of school celebrations by the local priest, even though the boy had a restraining order against the girl he raped. That the boy handed out roses to his classmates and teachers was described by the priest as a "demonstration".⁷⁸ Through analysis of discourse surrounding the rape in Bjästa, Jessica Rothén wrote a bachelor's thesis where she found evidence of rape-culture by the way people blamed the victim, alongside myths of rape, and rape statistics that circulated on social media in connection to the case.⁷⁹

To study public debate on a larger scale and to provide somewhat of an overview, the Google Trends search tool was utilised. Below, two figures show the trends of the search terms våldtäktskultur (Swedish word for "rape culture") and rape culture. The two figures show different time stamps of data mining. Although Google offers no explanation for this difference in dates, the second image only searches within news articles, which might explain why the search motor was not able to go further back than 2008. There are perhaps not enough news articles available online to search through from before 2008.

Figure 1 shows general search trends in Sweden and therefore shows that the terms rape culture and våldtäktskultur come in waves. In the early 2000s there is a spike in searches, which could mean that around the early 2000s, Swedish society was trying to understand this concept.

⁷⁵ Tomac Barin Jansson, "Hade jag varit kvinna hade du legat jävligt risigt till..." – En symtomatisk studie om män och manlighet inom svensk filmproduktion under 90- och 00-talen," (BA, Lund University, 2011), 17-18.

⁷⁶ Johan Ehrenberg, "Alla män ansvarar för våldtäkterna," *Aftonbladet*, 2003.

⁷⁷ *Vardagsrasismen*. "Våldtäktskulturen och kvinnan," *Vardagsrasismen*, 2014.
<https://vardagsrasismen.com/2014/04/04/valdtaktskulturen-och-kvinnan/>

⁷⁸ Mira Micic, "Bjöd in våldtäktsman – får inte sparken," *Aftonbladet*, 2010.
<https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/a2vaqa/bjod-in-valdtaktsman-far-inte-sparken>

⁷⁹ Jessica Rothén, "Att göra en Bjästa – En textanalys om skuldbeläggningen av ett våldtäktsoffer," (BA, Linnaeus University, 2016). 40.

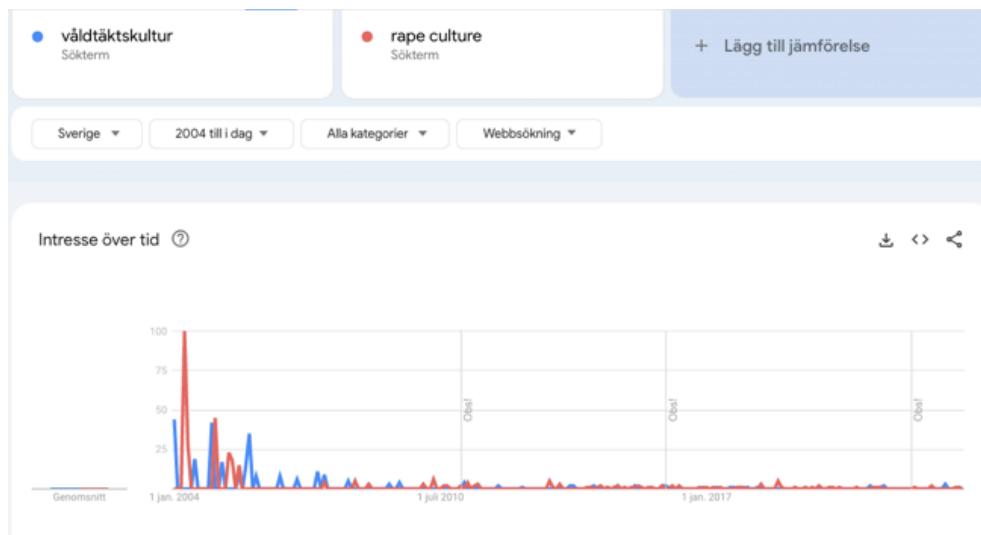


Figure 1. Google search trends: “våldtäktsskult” and “rape culture” in Sweden between 1 jan 2004 to 2 May 2023.

Figure 2 shows a spike in searches about rape culture and våldtäktsskult, both in Sweden and internationally, within news articles in August 2010, which was around the time that the rapes in Bjästa, and the case of Julian Assange was written about in Swedish and international news, respectively. This can point to how the issue of rape culture is connected to both the interest from society, as well as the inspiration for popular culture to be produced. Although not a precise science, the trends still say something about how much (or little) public debate goes beyond articles and news reports.



Figure 2. Google search trends within news, internationally: “våldtäktsskult” and “rape culture” between 1 january 2008 and 2 of May 2023.

School Distribution

Although this thesis does not focus on distribution, and therefore not School distribution of teen films in Sweden, a short discussion of this phenomenon is included. The reason for this inclusion in the historical context is the fact that the connection between production and school screenings somewhat intertwine. In Sweden, the Swedish Film Institute (Swedish: Svenska filminstitutet) is charged with creating pedagogical material to be used with films that are shown in the classroom at school. This pedagogical responsibility that the Swedish Film Institute (SFI) carries, makes the organisation malleable to change depending on laws and policies that the Swedish government carries through. In 1995, the concept of Skolbio (My translation: School Cinema) was introduced by the government and SFI to distribute contemporary films through showing them to entire schools.⁸⁰ Both *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig* were part of the School Cinema project around the time of their release, which points to the belief in their pedagogical potential.⁸¹ And with the policy changes presented to SFI in the 1990s, funding was subject to quotas to encourage the production of more films by, and about, young women.⁸² All of these aspects take part in changing and defining what Swedish teen films consist of – since they inadvertently might need to be pedagogical in the sense that they might be screened in schools.

Apart from School Cinema, SFI also produces pedagogical material to many teen films so that teachers can choose to screen a film depending on themes they would like their students to familiarise themselves with. The worksheets do not only provide thematic discussions, but they can also give an idea of the assumed age of the audience for each film. The film *Hip hip hora!* is recommended to be used from year six and above (age 12 and above), and *Säg att du älskar mig* is recommended for year nine or upper secondary school (age 15 to 19).⁸³ With the newer material, only *Flocken* has a work sheet created by SFI and is recommended from school years nine to twelve (age 14 to 19).⁸⁴ *Björnstad* does not have this pedagogical material for teachers to use, but has many unofficial work sheets available online in regards to the novel the series is based on. It is therefore not too far of a stretch to assume that the TV-series could be used in Swedish school as well.

⁸⁰ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 41.

⁸¹ Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 121.

⁸² Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 221.

⁸³ Kristin Breitenstein and Andreas Hoffsten, "Hip hip hora!," *Svenska filminstitutet*, (N/A)

<https://www.filminstitutet.se/contentassets/206bf09269b7429b95d0edf2702e15e9/hip-hip-hora.pdf> ; Anna Hedelius, "Säg att du älskar mig," (N/A),

https://www.filminstitutet.se/contentassets/2049afc653ea461da7762c7e1ac39e98/sag_att_du_alskar_mig.pdf

⁸⁴ Louise Lagerström, "Flocken," *Svenska filminstitutet*, 2016.

<https://www.filminstitutet.se/contentassets/00e86f5bea4d47ff9de6d6554101969c/flocken2.pdf>

This points to a difference in production when comparing American and Swedish contexts, as funding will affect which stories will be produced. With the funding that SFI provides, the policies and potential pedagogical aspects are part of production. In a way, one could argue that Swedish production is not as focused on making money as, for example, the private production context that American filmmaking heavily relies upon. This can also be seen through the studies that show that Hollywood produces more teen films during recessions.⁸⁵ Teenagers would rather go to the cinema with their friends than sit at home and watch TV with their parents, and so Hollywood leans on their teenage audiences when the adults want to save money.

With a short view back to the past done, evidently many aspects have been shown to play into the audio-visual stories that are produced in Sweden. Filmmakers inspired by contemporary legislations or debates intertwine with the production policies that in many ways govern Swedish film production. Now that the context of both research and society has been presented, the theory used to analyse the material will be presented.

Theory

To be able to conduct the textual analysis that this study consists of, Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of semiotics from 1915 is utilised – although a more developed version of his theory. With semiotics, the idea is that signs carry cultural meaning that goes beyond the sign itself. Signs are not just spoken or written words, but also images, statues, films and any other cultural artefacts. The meaning that these artefacts create is connected to cultural contexts of those who “speak” the language.⁸⁶ To deepen this theory of semiotics, Stuart Hall's interpretation of semiotics from 1997 mainly focuses on representation. This theory points out that culture is made up of “shared meanings” that are not only made up by spoken language, but also signs, images and any other cultural artefacts.⁸⁷ This means that two people who claim to belong to the same culture would interpret any cultural artefact quite similarly – they share cultural meanings. So, how something is represented in a society will contribute to a shared interpretation of their meaning in that particular culture. This shared interpretation is made up

⁸⁵ Elissa H. Nelson, “The New Old Face of a Genre: The Franchise Teen Film as Industry Strategy,” *Cinema Journal*, 57:1, (Fall 2017), 126.

⁸⁶ Ruth Doughty, and Christine Etherington-Wright, *Understanding film theory*, Second edition., Palgrave, London, 2018, 87-88; 231

⁸⁷ Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Scotprint, 1997. 1.

of ever-evolving cultural codes that represent shared meanings.⁸⁸ If white people are mainly represented as good people, and black people are mainly represented as bad people, this representation will affect how culture will interpret the meanings of these representations.

In the sense of film studies, representation is then connected to how film is a language and how different signs and codes carry meanings beyond its face-value. For example, the way a film is made, as well as what the characters say, and who is seen on screen are all signifiers of something within the culture of its creation. The analysed signs and codes can pinpoint what they represent by using this theory of how a culture shares similar meanings. Attaching representation to these concepts below, the cultural meaning can be further understood.

Social class has to do with the Marxist theory of how society is made up of several classes, where middle, and upper class oppress the working class. In film theory, the Marxist theory has adopted several other theories into its model of analysis, first the feminist angle in the 1970s, and later, when the concept of feminist analysis was more heavily critiqued for being too white, angles of race and sexual preference. The critiques built upon each other, as Marxist feminists started out by stating that only studying class differences obscures issues of gender, and in the 1990s, scholars pointed out how the binary of gender obscured oppressions of race.⁸⁹

Gender is the sociological theory of how different genders are treated different in society. In this text, the concept of gender and voyeurism is connected to especially the scenes that contain sexual violence. In film theory, voyeurism was presented by scholar Laura Mulvey in 1975, and describes how the camera can act as a vessel for the viewer to objectify women on screen. In her text *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey uses psychoanalysis to explain how the cinematic image of women is passive, and the gaze of men is active, as the male gaze, as a concept, has control of how women are presented on screen.⁹⁰ This article has of course been discussed and debated since the 1970s, with Mulvey critiquing her own text in, for example, 2015, putting forward new angles of race and queer theory to her original text.⁹¹ Still, Mulvey's theory of voyeurism in the sense of the viewer objectifying and being a "peeping Tom" is a relevant concept in film theory.

⁸⁸ Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Scotprint, 1997. 19; 26.

⁸⁹ Jane Gaines, "White privilege and looking relations: race and gender in feminist film theory," in Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (ed.), *Visual culture: The Reader*, Sage publications, 1999. 402 – 410. 403.

⁹⁰ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, 16:3, 1975. 6-18. 17.

⁹¹ Laura Mulvey, "Introduction: 1970s Feminist Film Theory and the Obsolescent Object," in: Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers, *Feminisms – Diversity, Difference, and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Studies*, Amsterdam University Press, 2015. 17-26.

Race is a term not commonly used in Swedish contexts, as the overall consensus is to use ethnicity, which is a term that is broader, and also includes culture. Still, for this study the term ethnicity is too broad, and so, the term race is used to pinpoint how racism causes society to believe that internal differences are evident through external differences (i.e. the colour of your skin).⁹²

Northerner is arguably the term that is the most unfamiliar in this context. In an English speaking context, Northerner is perhaps most commonly used to describe people from northern England.⁹³ In this context, on the other hand, the term is used synonymously with the Swedish term Norrlänning, which carries many connotations in the Swedish context. It not only describes the geographical context of being a person from the northern part of Sweden, but it also carries the sociological impacts of stereotypical representation that Madeleine Eriksson describes in her research.⁹⁴ In this study, rural and urban are terms used to describe differences between cities and areas with lower human population density.

As seen above, many different aspects will be utilized to broaden the scope of conclusions that can be drawn from the research questions. To be able to interconnect these theories the theory of intersectionality is used. This term is used to be able to study several axis of oppression at the same time.⁹⁵ In 1989 Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term to be able to argue that there existed a scholarly binary, where racism and feminism were separated, and therefore obscured how the two aspects affect each other in society.⁹⁶ Crenshaw points out that feminist discourse has focused on only one axis of oppression, and that this method of analysis has erased the different experiences that come from the reality of not only gender, but race, class, and sexuality as well.⁹⁷ By combining several axis of oppression, Crenshaw has pushed the envelope to look at representation as a more complex and entangled web. For example, this study will look at teenage girls with geographical differences, racial differences, and social class differences. By simultaneously analysing these aspects, a deeper conversation about oppression can be held as, for example, the depiction of someone white or someone black will impact the way their respective social class is presented alongside their race.

⁹² Pallas, *Vithet*, 24-25.

⁹³ Wikipedia, Northern England, *Wikipedia*, (N/A). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_England

⁹⁴ Eriksson, *(Re)producing a periphery*.

⁹⁵ Eva Midden, "The arena of religion: Malala and contemporary feminism." In *Doing gender in media, art and culture: a comprehensive guide to gender studies*, edited by Rosemarie Buikema, Liedeke Plate, and Kathrin Thiele, Second edition., London: Routledge. 2018. 28.

⁹⁶ Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139.

⁹⁷ Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

Also, this study needs a term to use for the way different cultural contexts can overlap, as well as take from, and give to each other. In this study, this type of overlap occurs when the analysis connects teen films to its contemporary public debate and legislation.⁹⁸ In the analysis, this concept will be studied through the term interaction. This term points to how popular culture and public debate converse in the sense that they affect each other.

Apart from the intersectional analysis of signs and codes, a deeper understanding of the depiction of rape on film must also be presented. The reason for this, is that the sexual violence in the films analysed is somewhat the catalyst for the story, and therefore carries significance in the narrative's trajectory. In 2019, Amanda Spallacci published an article about the subject of rape on film. Here, Spallacci uses Mulvey's concepts to discuss how when the camera shows the woman being raped, many things occur at the same time, that all take part in affecting the audience. The viewer follows the event, and therefore is a witness to the assault. Being a witness is in contrast to real-life, where rape is more often than not, without witnesses. This then, according to Spallacci, perpetuates the distrust of real rape victims, as the lack of witnesses is a lack of evidence – which creates the distrust. In that sense, Spallacci presents a situation where the viewer must be present in the room, or else they will not believe that it has happened – even though it is a fictional film.⁹⁹ Spallacci also claims that watching a rape scene is both voyeuristic and empathising. In Spallacci's article, voyeurism is connected to the popularity of violent porn that then evokes sexual pleasure in the viewer from watching the rape happen. At the same time, the viewer empathises with the victim, which means that a rape scene is not only an objectifying scene, but also a subjectifying scene. It is not only a scene that makes the viewer a “peeping Tom”, but also a way of reassuring the viewer that what the victim claims is “real” – since the viewer witnesses the crime as it happens.¹⁰⁰

Since this study connects two time-frames to study differences and similarities, the concept of Change and Continuity by Balbi and Magaudda is also used. Although Balbi and Magaudda are media scholars, and their concept is applied to the myth of digital revolutions; the concept of change and continuity can be applied to this study.¹⁰¹ By not approaching this study with the belief of revolutions in filmic portrayals of teenagers being subjected to sexual violence, the study can point to both similarities and differences that have occurred over time.

⁹⁸ McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, 150.

⁹⁹ Amanda Spallacci, “Representing Rape Trauma in Film: Moving Beyond the Event,” *Arts*, 8:8, 2019, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Spallacci, “Representing Rape Trauma,” 6.

¹⁰¹ Gabriele Balbi and Paolo Magaudda, *A History of Digital Media – An intermedia and global perspective*, Routledge, 2018, 2.

Analysis

Character Portrayal

With the four different stories, different characters are used for different reasons. Through study and comparison of representation, a fuller understanding of the narrative is possible. Starting off with the 2000s, the characters in *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig*, respectively, mainly show one social class. The characters in *Hip hip hora!* all live in houses or apartments with parents who have middle class jobs, such as teacher. Sofie is never seen to help her father with anything domestic, except for cleaning up after her and her father have had a fight and made a mess. Sofie seemingly lives a middle-class life with her father who is a teacher at the school she goes to. With all this follows the loss of class-distinguishing that both Pallas and Mulari discuss in their research.¹⁰² The film neither celebrates, nor questions the culture presented, but rather acts as a representation of a norm that is supposed to be taken for granted.

Comparatively, in *Säg att du älskar mig* Fatou helps her mother clean up at her barber shop and often babysits her little sister, pointing to a household of lesser means where expectations of the children helping out then increases. One of Fatou's friends, Lamin, brags about how expensive his moped was; the popular girls smoke during recess at school; and after being raped, Fatou's phone was stolen by Raddi. Collectively, these codes point to an environment of people who all are part of a lower middle class or working class. By tying in these shorthand codes into the story, Fatou's world is widely different from Sofie's world, where none of these codes are used to place the characters in a lower (or higher) social class. Sofie and her father take the bus and subway, which in a Swedish context is relatively neutral when comparing working- and middle class. Fatou's mother feels bad about hurting her daughter and takes Fatou and her little sister to buy a DVD to say she is sorry. This small gesture is presented as something out of the ordinary, that they cannot afford too often, once again reinforcing the lower class Fatou is part of.

Not only through social class, but also racially, there are differences between Fatou and Sofie. Fatou goes to a school where many of her friends are people of colour. Fatou, herself, is a black girl, and one of the two boys who rape her is of middle eastern descent. Sofie is white, and so are her friends, as well as the popular boys who assault her, and popular girls at her school. The way the social class and race is presented in both films affect the rest of the story and outcome. *Säg att du älskar mig* and *Hip hip hora!* are also similar in many ways. Both Fatou and Sofie dress similarly and live in a single parent home, both are subjected to the assault

¹⁰² Pallas, *Vithet*, 158.; Mulari, *New Feminisms*, 111.

by boys from their school, and both change and grow through the experience. Still, their lives are quite different. Fatou's life seems far removed from Sofie's world, and so the parallels that occur between the films show how similar stories can be approached in different ways.

Fast forward to 2015, and *Flocken* is released in Swedish theatres. The year after, 2016, the novel *Björnstad* is released which is turned into a TV-show in 2020. Both of these stories have broadened the scope of the narrative of sexual assault by following not only the victim's point of view, but also the culprit as well as other members of the society in which the story takes place. This concept allows for a greater insight into how different lives are affected by these events, whilst also showing the viewer an idea of a cross section of Swedish society as a whole. In *Flocken* and *Björnstad* respectively, the victims of sexual assault are coded differently. When Maya moves with her family to *Björnstad*, the viewer learns that her father has played in the National Hockey League (NHL) in the Northern America. They move into a big house in the small town, and are shown to have a nice car and a contemporarily decorated house. In *Flocken*, Jennifer is shown to live with her alcoholic, single mother in a run-down house where they have to cut wood for heating, and live at the end of a gravel road leading up to the house that has no beautifully kept lawn. Indoors, the house is run down as well, and no renovations seem to have happened in many years. Comparatively, Maya is coded as middle class, and Jennifer as working class. In both cases, there are also characters present that represent the other side of the social class spectrum. In *Björnstad* the viewer also gets to know Amat, the character with an immigrant mother who has a job as a cleaner at the ice hockey rink, and is a single parent. Compared to other characters, Amat and his mother are coded as lower class citizens who have to work to make ends meet. In *Flocken*, the teenage boy who sexually assaults Jennifer is coded to be of a higher social standing than Jennifer. His family consists of two working parents, and they live in a big house with a beautiful view over a freshly mown lawn and a lake. They drive a modern car and are modestly coded to be middle class through their clothes and belongings.

Although both *Flocken* and *Björnstad* are supposed to show a cross-section of Swedish society, the whiteness is still prevalent within each story. In *Björnstad*, Amat, Amat's friend, and Amat's mother are the only characters who are not white, and in *Flocken* only one girl is not white. In *Flocken*, the non-white girl is not heavily present, but seems to be part of the classless middle-class that is so common in Swedish film. In *Björnstad*, Amat is shown to be of a lower class than the rest of the characters, pointing to their lower standing in society through middle-class characters offering Amat money for his silence, as well as forcing Amat's mother to clean up a mess at the hockey rink on her day off.

Then there is the matter of geography. The examples from the 2000s are in an urban setting, placing the stories in a middle class suburban area in *Hip hip hora!*, and in a working-class suburban area in *Säg att du älskar mig*. Mulari argues that films from the late 1990s and early 2000s that are about teenage girls set in rural areas in Sweden often centre around climbing the social class ladder by moving from a rural area to an urban one.¹⁰³ Through a broader scope, Wallengren argues that the differences between urban and rural people at the turn of the century were coded through the way rural people lived in homes with old furnishings, listened to outdated music and wore more functional than fashion-forward clothes.¹⁰⁴ This meant that the 2000s showed a social segregation between cities and small-towns, but also a shift in values, as the small town now was the dangerous place where the decay of humanity was perpetuated.¹⁰⁵ Although this is the way Northerners in Sweden are presented, Eriksson argues that the scenic *mise-en-scène* can be used to represent what is symbolically Swedish, by using the backdrop to celebrate what is seen as most traditionally "Swedish".¹⁰⁶ Still, the geographical generalisations mentioned above, place the region and its inhabitants in the scope of being a place of: "[...] population decrease, lack of female citizens, and unemployment."¹⁰⁷

By applying these arguments to the newer teen films, *Flocken* and *Björnstad*, the characterisation is partially seen. Still, as these stories seem to aim to show a cross section of Swedish society, the stereotypical, outdated version of Northerners is somewhat more balanced by showing different social classes living together in a society. But comparing the newer to the older films, the romanticising of Swedish landscape is present in both *Flocken* and *Björnstad* as the story is spliced with static, scenic views of forests and lakes. Such romanticising of "Swedishness" is not present in *Hip hip hora!* or *Säg att du älskar mig*, which would suggest that the suburbs are not as symbolically Swedish as the rural parts of Sweden are, as the research presented in the Research Overview already put forward.

Additionally, there is a difference in the way the minor characters are presented in the films from the 2000s and 2010s. In *Björnstad*, there are a few ice hockey fans who regularly show up to the games. These people are crude in their way of speaking, and are coded as alcoholics. In *Flocken*, mob mentality and borderline incest is utilised to paint a picture of Northerners. Also, in both *Björnstad* and *Flocken*, hunting and guns are part of the aesthetics and the plot. Combined, these codes present a different world than that of Swedish cities. This

¹⁰³ Mulari, *New Feminisms*.

¹⁰⁴ Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur," 54.

¹⁰⁵ Wallengren, "Kultur och okultur," 78.

¹⁰⁶ Eriksson, *(Re)producing a periphery*, 69.

¹⁰⁷ Eriksson, *(Re)producing a periphery*, 69.

is more prevalent in *Björnstad*, as the family have lived in Northern America and come back to the small Swedish town. This kind of coding is not present in either *Hip hip hora!* or *Säg att du älskar mig*, pointing to how there is no need to create a distance towards the suburban culture in Sweden. Thus, the city life is seen as the norm, and the rural Northerners are seen as the outliers.

Another aspect of character portrayal is heterosexual attractiveness. And there is a clear difference between the two eras of study. In *Säg att du älskar mig* and *Hip hip hora!* the main characters who are subjected to the assault are portrayed in a way to enhance their attractiveness. Both Fatou and Sofie dress in tight tops and short skirts and are in contrast to their closest friends who dress more moderately. In Fatou's case, all of the popular girls dress more scantily, but in Sofie's school she sticks out when she wears a halter neck top with no cardigan. These differences in school culture bring other differences as well. On Sofie's first day, when she and her father catches the bus to school, he questions her outfit that shows a lot of cleavage and back. The first time Sofie talks to the popular boys at school, the leader of the group, who later on is the instigator of Sofie's assault, takes advantage of Sofie's naivety to touch her breast whilst pretending to point out a stain. This is meant to show how Sofie's way of acting and dressing is a naïve way to gain popularity at school without fully understanding the ways she can be taken advantage of by this. After Sofie's assault, her clothes become more modest for a while, but the tighter clothes are later used by her to make a point. Sofie's attractiveness therefore seems to be used to point out how desirability is placed upon anyone who dresses a certain way, no matter how young and inexperienced they are.

On the other hand, Fatou's attractiveness is presented as something she is fully aware of. Early in the film, Fatou and a few of the popular girls dance sensually in front of the popular boys as the two groups dare each other to take more clothes off. Additionally, Fatou is shown to have a boyfriend whom she has had sexual relationships with, and the popular boys at school go through social media to look at sexy photos of Fatou that she has posted.

In *Flocken*, Jennifer mainly wears jeans with a tank top and a baggy shirt. Her hair often covers her face and her makeup is grungy. Granted, the plot starts after the assault has happened, but with no one commenting on a drastically different choice of clothes, it seems as her aesthetic is somewhat the same as before. Maya, in *Björnstad*, is also prone to wear clothes that cover up and don't draw attention to them. Neither Jennifer nor Maya have scenes in which their behaviour or clothing is questioned in the vein of "asking for it." Still, what is questioned is their integrity as people in both films say that the girl reported the crime for attention and

because she has a crush on the boy and wants revenge. In both these cases from the newer material, the stories therefore don't utilise clothes or behaviour to sexualise the assaulted.

So, overall, what can be said of representation of the character portrayals from the 2000s and 2010s? There are obvious differences in choice of setting as well as inclusion of characters. With the older films, a suburban teenage girl is presented as being the subject of sexual assault. In the newer teen films, the victim has been removed to a northern rural area. Three out of four of the victims are white, and only one of these three is of working class. And the only non-white victim is both black and of lower class. Still, with two middle class victims, and two working class victims from the material, the scope might point to how change and continuity is present throughout the eras.

Aesthetics of Assault

With the characterisations in mind, there are clear representational differences of the level of violence, and the way the assault is shown in each film. As will be stated below, these differences may stem from the different levels of oppression each victim represents on an intersectional level.

Sofie in *Hip hip hora!*, drinks more than she can handle at a house party and passes out on the living room floor. After passing out, the popular boys from school that Sofie so desperately wanted to befriend and date, mock and grope her. Then it escalates and they decide to remove Sofie's panties and place them on her head before taking photos of her as they hold up her skirt and point the camera to show it all. Standing around Sofie are all of the party guests, and the only one who, weakly, tries to tell them to stop is Sebbe, a boy whom Sofie had kissed and almost given a hand job earlier that night. Sebbe is called gay for his weak efforts to stop them and is told to shut up. Sofie's close friend Emma sees the events unfold but is too scared to do anything and leaves the party. Sofie doesn't wake up until the next morning when the girl who hosted the party wakes her to tell her she has to leave. Sofie still has her panties on her head but is not aware of the events that unfolded. It is not until she is back at school that she sees a photo on her locker and learns of the way she was treated. These photos get circulated around school and are the reason for the way Sofie is subsequently treated.

Fatou in *Säg att du älskar mig* is also drunk before she gets assaulted. Following Raddi under the bleachers of a packed football stadium, Raddi coaxes Fatou to drink some more before they kiss, and Fatou asks if he loves her. This kiss turns into violent groping before Raddi's friend Ville suddenly shows up and mockingly says that Fatou and Raddi look cosy. After once

again forcing Fatou to drink more alcohol by screaming at her, Fatou gets up to try to throw up. As she gets up she leans over stacked wooden crates, she looks unsteady on her feet. Then Raddi and Ville push Fatou down on the crates, grope her and one by one rape her. Fatou's friend Lamin suddenly shows up and as Fatou screams for him to help her, Lamin instead reluctantly listens to Raddi and Ville and stands watch by the door in case someone else shows up. After Ville and Raddi are done raping Fatou vaginally, Raddi shoves a glass bottle into Fatou's anus, steals her mobile phone and then runs away with Ville and Lamin in tow. Fatou is found by her best friend still lying on the crates, bleeding.

The difference in graphic violence between *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig* is quite pronounced. For Sofie, the sexual violence consisted of groping on top of her clothes, and photographs of her genitals. The camera cuts from close-ups to wide-shots, giving the viewer a sense of what the characters feel about what is happening to Sofie. With no one interfering in a more persuasive way, the scene seems to point to the inaction that happens when no-one makes a first move to stop an assault.

Comparing this to *Säg att du älskar mig*, the viewer is subjected to the entirety of the act, with the camera placed in a corner, as if the viewer is in the room when it happens. There are a few close-ups spliced in-between the single take of the rape, but almost the whole act is seen from one angle where all four characters are visible. The rape that happens consists of groping, penetrative sex with Raddi and Ville's penises, as well as the insertion of a bottle into Fatou's anus. This difference in level of assault points to a difference in how races are presented in Swedish film. In *Hip hip hora!*, the assault is presented as more of a "boys will be boys" vein, that presents Mouse as a terrible person that just wants to have fun at other people's expenses. Also, in *Säg att du älskar mig*, we see an aggressive rape where Fatou is conscious and trying to get away from her rapists, whilst Sofie is unconscious and humiliated, but not raped. In *Hip hip hora!* the main character is a white teenage girl, with white teenage assaulters. In *Säg att du älskar mig* the main character is a black, teenage girl, and one of her assaulters is a non-white boy. Although one cannot say that these choices are consciously made to show that non-white men as more aggressive, or that filmmakers are more protective of white girls' innocence by not assaulting them as aggressively as in the other films, there are indications of a pattern of showcasing white Swedes in one way, and non-white Swedes in another. Comparing other aspects of the assault, the venue of the assault is also in stark contrast. Sofie is subjected to her assault at a house party with nice décor and large rooms that are well lit and comfortable. Fatou's assault happens underneath bleachers at a football stadium, a place with little to no

light, and concrete floors, walls and ceiling. Not to mention that the assault happened on stacked crates.

Flocken does not show the rape of Jennifer. The rape is presented through scenes of Jennifer talking to a police officer for her first hearing, and then again when she gives a statement at court. In the film, the full story of the rape is not presented until at the court room, when Jennifer tells the jury how the assault unfolded. It is then told that Alex forced Jennifer down on the floor and forced his penis into her mouth to orally rape her. Although the scene of Jennifer and Alex is omitted, at the end of the film, Alex rapes another girl, which is shown. This happens after the summer break celebrations where a few friends of Alex meet up for a midnight swim. A girl, Amanda, takes Alex to an abandoned house where they kiss. After the kiss, Alex unzips his pants and Amanda, seemingly in shock, starts to pull away. Alex then forces himself on Amanda as she cries and tells him to stop. Alex throws Amanda down on a bed and rapes her from behind before finishing himself off by masturbation in a corner. The last thing the viewer sees of this scene is a limp Amanda still face down on the bed, crying, and Alex standing in a corner, masturbating with his back towards Amanda.

Björnstad takes place at a party, where teenagers are celebrating a win of the town's hockey team. Maya and Kevin who have been flirting for a few weeks, find themselves in Kevin's room where they talk about Kevin's family and childhood, and look at his trophies and photos. After Maya says that she feels a bit dizzy and wants to find her friend who is downstairs, Kevin grabs Maya's arm and angrily asks her if she is going to decline a winner. After Kevin states that he is the king of this town and could get any girl he wants Maya tells him to do so and calls him a loser. Kevin then once again grabs Maya and forces her down on his bed as she screams at him to stop and to let her go. Kevin pulls Maya's pants down and rapes her. After struggling for a while underneath Kevin, Maya goes limp and stares at the wall or at childhood photos of Kevin on the night stand. Amat suddenly enters the room and Kevin immediately stops. Maya then gets up and hurriedly puts her pants back on and leaves.

In *Flocken*, the assault of Jennifer is not shown to the viewer, but Amanda's is. Amanda is a teenage girl of seemingly east-asian descent, compared to Jennifer who is white. During Amanda's rape, the camera barely shows Amanda and mainly focuses on Alex's face as he rapes her. In *Björnstad*, the opposite is presented. Here, we barely see Kevin, but see Maya's face as she is being raped. In both cases, the bodies of the teenage girls are not focused on. The camera mainly wishes to show that a rape is happening and to show either the perpetrator's face or the victim's face, respectively. In Alex's face, there is a distant stare in his eyes. In Maya's face, tears come streaming and fear is soon replaced with blankness as she stares at the photos

or walls. Interestingly, there is also a difference of location between *Flocken* and *Björnstad*. Jennifer is supposedly violated in a school bathroom, and Amanda is raped in an abandoned house on an old bed with no covers. Maya is, raped in Kevin's bedroom, in a big house with nicely decorated rooms.

Spallacci's description of rape scenes as both voyeuristic and empathising; and her discussions of witnessing a crime, is also important to bring up here. In *Hip hip hora!*, the assault happens in the middle of a living room with many spectators. To cut between Sofie's unconscious face and other party goers' faces then both brings empathizing and voyeuristic emotions as the viewer is almost compared to those who do nothing to help Sophie. Fatou in *Säg att du älskar mig* is presented in more of a documentary style, as the scene mainly unfolds from one point of view of a hand-held camera with a wide angle. This style of shot once again furthers the voyeuristic aspects as it somewhat feels like found footage. There are no close-ups of Fatou's face that would aim to feel empathic towards Fatou, but also, there are no close-ups of her other body parts either, that could be seen as sexualizing her. With that said, when Ville and Raddi pull down Fatou's top, the viewer can also see her breasts. When they turn her over to rape her from behind, her buttocks are also visible to the viewer, and sometimes Fatou's face is out of shot or covered by her arm. Nothing is focused on, but the action of the characters urges the eye to see different parts of Fatou's body at different times. In *Hip hip hora!*, the action is cut to, as shots of Mouse's hands groping Sofie's breasts and pulling down her panties are shown from different angles that gives the audience the best view at any point of the action.

In *Flocken*, the aspect of witnessing that Spallacci discusses is important to bring up. The assault of Jennifer is never witnessed, but is told to the viewer, in some ways mimicking real life where witnesses are uncommon. Arguably, though, any doubts about Alex's guilt can be washed away as the viewer witnesses the rape of Amanda. As mentioned above, Amanda is barely seen, and the camera mainly focuses on Alex's face, trying to make the scene less voyeuristic. *Björnstad* also adheres to the theory of audience as witness, but tries to steer clear from more voyeuristic angles, and emphasises the witnessing through Amat who accidentally walks in on the rape, just as in *Säg att du älskar mig* with Lamin suddenly showing up. With Maya's face shown in most shots, this production chose to focus on empathizing with Maya, rather than vilifying Kevin by showing his face.

Comparing all four films, the racial and social class differences are more clear than the geographical ones. With location of assault that is shown to the viewer, Fatou and Amanda are both raped in a location that makes the violence seem as something not part of polite society, and that the location helps vilify the perpetrator. With Sofie and Maya, the location places the

violence in homes, emphasising a distrust that women might feel towards men no matter where they are. The assault against Jennifer is harder to place, but still follows *Björnstad* and *Hip hip hora!* in the sense that the violence occurs in a place where everyone is supposed to feel safe – at school. It should still be pointed out that the level of violence cannot fully be compared as none of the scenes are created and presented the same, but the fact that the most violent act is committed towards a black teenage girl, and that the filmmakers decided to include the rape of Amanda but not of Jennifer, points towards subconscious, racist undertones. In the case of Fatou, there is yet another layer of racism as the main perpetrator is presented as someone of middle eastern descent. This then follows the research that Pallas presents, as he points out that white characters are presented in a more forgiving way than non-white people are in Swedish film.¹⁰⁸

In all cases except for with Jennifer, alcohol is prevalent before the assault happens. Sofie and Fatou are shown as a lot more drunk than Amanda and Maya are. Both Sofie and Fatou dress more scantily than Maya, Jennifer and Amanda do. As time has gone, then, it seems that sexuality, alcohol and clothing is no longer as important as it was before. In the 2000s, the argument seems to be that women should be able to dress as sexy as they want, and drink as much as they want, without being subjected to assault. In the 2010s, the argument seems to be that no matter how you dress or behave, you being raped has nothing to do with that, but rather has to do with the mental and social state of who assaults you, as well as rape culture. These two angles do not contradict each other, but rather build upon each other in a way that points to what the cultural climate has evolved into. If the arguments used to be that women should be able to dress as they like without being assaulted, a more cynical view has emerged, saying that it doesn't matter if you dress sexy or not; the fact that someone rapes you has more to do with rape culture, rather than you.

To conclude this section, it seems that these scenes harken back to Projansky's research, and point to how scenes of rape are used to urge society to stop rape, but also perpetuate the ways rape is represented and interpreted culturally. It also seems that the interpretation of Swedish codes and signs connected to rape change depending on the person's race and social class. Although this scope of films is small, it seems that the level of violence, the perpetrator, and the setting are all codes of rape that are affected by who the victim is.

¹⁰⁸ Pallas, *Vithet*, 123-124.

Relations and Reactions

Arguably, the main body of each teen film concerns the aftermath of the assaults. Although this is represented differently as each film is influenced by both style and story. The crime is reported in all films but *Hip hip hora!*. There is no mention or discussion of reporting the crime in *Hip hip hora!*, and so the discussions concerning that film is mainly about everyone's reactions. In *Flocken* and *Säg att du älskar mig*, the rapists are convicted in court, and the proceedings are shown to the viewer. In *Björnstad* the charges are dropped due to lack of evidence – despite the witness. With this in mind, an analysis of the aftermath can be conducted.

In the more urban settings of *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig*, the reactions to the assault comes mainly from schoolmates, parents and personnel at school. There are even scenes and phrases that are almost mirrored: Both Sofie's dad and Fatou's mother get into fights with their respective daughters where selfishness is the main topic. Fatou is accused of only thinking about herself when she fails to get back home to take care of her little sister. The reason for Fatou's failure to show up was the rape, and so the viewer empathises with Fatou. The viewer emphasises with Sofie as well, even when she sexually assaults her teacher out of frustration. This happens after Sofie is once again groped by Mouse in the school cafeteria, and Sofie subsequently fighting Mouse. Mouse is told to sit down and be quiet, and Sofie is dragged off to have a talk with her teacher. Here, the teacher tells Sofie that boys fondle and grope girls because they like them. To prove a point, Sofie then gropes her teacher's breasts and asks if this makes her happy, and to take it as a compliment. This scene is what precedes Sofie and her dad's fight where he tells her that she ruins everything. These parallels show a focus on parenting and parents' lack of understanding of what it means to be a teenage girl in Sweden in the early 2000s, and adheres to the perpetuated disconnect between generations in our society.

In both films, teachers and personnel at the schools are utilized to show another aspect of a generational gap. Yet again, this is treated differently in both films. In *Hip hip hora!*, Sofie's teacher tries to be a cool teacher who understands her pupils, which only makes her seem awkward to both the characters and viewers. In *Säg att du älskar mig* the student councillor is a recurring character who mispronounces Fatou's name as "Fattå" (/fatto:/). Fatou corrects the councillor on her pronunciation, and although one might find the incorrect pronunciation as funny, the sentiment of an ignorant white woman comes through.

Even though these stories are somewhat similar, there are many differences in execution. *Hip hip hora!* has a lighthearted tone, and invites the viewer to laugh at several instances, such as Sofie slapping Sebbe's dick when she is trying to give him a hand job. This happens because Sebbe describes giving a hand job as "trying to get the last of the ketchup out of the bottle" (My

translation), that Sofie does by slapping the bottle's bottom - and thus his penis is subjected to that action. In *Säg att du älskar mig* there are no light-hearted moments where the viewer is supposed to laugh at or with the protagonist as she manoeuvres her adolescence. The style of filming is gritty and many of the scenes heart-breaking or down right hard to watch as they take the violence to another level. Fatou's best friend wants Fatou to report the crime, but Fatou initially doesn't want to. This puts a strain on their relationship as Fatou tries to pretend like nothing happened, but her friend tells people at school what happened. Even the scenes where Fatou is laughing and singing with friends are veiled with an understanding that Fatou is trying to pretend like nothing is wrong, and so her actions feel forced and insincere; like a coping mechanism.

Hip hip hora! and *Säg att du älskar mig* is more about Sofie and Fatou than about others in their respective circles. Still, the aftermath prompts scenes and storylines about those in their vicinity. This is more of a societal aspect in *Säg att du älskar mig*, that helps point to how different people might react to the rape. *Säg att du älskar mig* includes Raddi and Lamin talking about the rape, which ends with Lamin taking back Fatou's mobile phone that he stole. Lamin and Fatou's friendship drastically disintegrates with the rape that he witnessed but did nothing to stop. But with the police report and Lamin asked to give a statement, we see Lamin and his mother at the police station, and follow their storyline as well. Lamin's mother is friends with Fatou's mother, and after Fatou has reported the crime, Lamin's mother tries to convince Fatou's mother to send Fatou back to the country where Fatou's mother is from.

To then compare *Hip hip hora!* and *Säg att du älskar mig*, the latter is also about race and therefore lends itself to be more focused on relationships of a societal angle. This societal angle that extends outside of school is also present in both *Flocken* and *Björnstad*. They are not just about the raped girls, but also about the society around them, and therefore about a rape culture. We follow the stories of witnesses and of friends and family, and are showed the bigger picture of rape culture. Where Raddi and Mouse are shown to be "monsters," the rapists in *Flocken* and *Björnstad* have a backstory, a conscience and are not necessarily seen as monsters. They are, in fact, so loved by their respective communities that people don't believe the girls who were raped because the boys are so nice and loved.

The newer material has a more rural aspect to them as they are set in smaller towns in northern Sweden. With the culture of "everyone knows everyone," as it is said in rural Sweden, the impact of the rape reaches further than it does in both films from the 2000s. There seems to exist an urge to place these stories in a place of little to no sympathy. Even though both stories are filled with people from all walks of life, although almost all of them white, there are few

who believe the victims. In both films, it seems that social media plays a big part in creating and perpetuating rumours, slander and misinformation in the community. In *Björnstad*, Maya's father starts to doubt his daughter's rape when he sees a video on social media of Kevin and Maya at the party where she was raped, laughing and chatting together. *Flocken* displays discussions from blogs and chats with anonymous users, slandering Jennifer and her family. Towards the end, the viewer learns that the main instigator of the rumours and slander online comes from Alex's mother. This use of social media to spread misinformation and rumours was also present in the rape case of Bjästa, and shows a changing environment for teenagers, pointing to how the discourse about the rape is out of their control in a much broader sense than in the films from the 2000s.¹⁰⁹

With the Northerner aspect of *Flocken* and *Björnstad*, there is more focus on how the parents are affected in more ways than learning that their daughter has been violated. Maya's father who is a trainer for the junior hockey team, is almost ousted from the team because of his suspension of Kevin from the team during the investigation. Jennifer's mother is told that she cannot work at the cash register at the local supermarket anymore, and has to take over inventory duty instead. This fits in with the mob mentality that is presented in both films. In *Björnstad*, teammates of Kevin ask to speak to Maya's father after they realise that Kevin won't play for the team. And this also follows Amat as he is attacked by these teammates after giving his statement as a witness. In *Flocken*, a mob of grown-ups who are friends of Alex's parents show up outside Jennifer's home and attack Jennifer's mother's boyfriend. The mob mentality presented in *Flocken* even harkens back to the name of the film, as "flocken" in Swedish means "The flock."

This also brings the discussion of social class to the forefront. In both *Flocken* and *Björnstad* there are, as mentioned before, all walks of life present. Still, another aspect is added to this that aligns with Eriksson's studies, as the alcoholism, physical violence and inclusion of guns adds to a view of Northerners as more brutal than Southerners. Alcoholics at the local pub get into a physical fight with Maya's dad, and a drunk mob attacks Jennifer's mother's boyfriend. Both iterations, alongside the attack of Amat, points to how Northerners act in affect and are dangerous to anyone who does not conform to the unspoken rules their society has created.

Another aspect to add to the savageness present in the presentation of the North, can be found in *Flocken*, close to Jennifer's mother's boyfriend. After standing up for Jennifer and her

¹⁰⁹ Rothén, "Att göra en Bjästa," 2016.

family, his horse is killed by those who believe that Jennifer is lying about the rape. Using the killing of a horse, as well as a butcher's arboretum as a backdrop in other scenes, the film wants to evoke a callousness and brutality that is culturally part of the stereotypical view of Northerners in Sweden, as seen in Eriksson's research. To further this argument, a borderline incest scene is used in *Flocken*. After Jennifer's mother's boyfriend is assaulted by the mob, and his horse is killed (presumably by the same people), Jennifer shows up on his doorstep. He is shirtless and holds Jennifer as she cries, knowing that she and everyone connected to her is ostracised. Then they kiss. He pulls away and Jennifer runs home, embarrassed. Why this kiss is included in the film can only be speculated, but it is still, arguably, a strange inclusion in the film, which evokes thoughts of Eriksson's research which compares Swedish Northerner films to American Hillbilly films.¹¹⁰

Interestingly, the representation of friendships are handled differently across the decades. In *Hip hip hora!*, Sofie loses all of her female friends and finds friendship in Sebbe, the guy who weakly tries to stop Mouse from harassing Sofie. Fatou metaphorically pushes her best friend away as she tries to talk Fatou into reporting the crime, and they find their friendship again as Fatou's friend tells Fatou's mother why Fatou has been behaving so strangely. In *Flocken*, Jennifer loses all her friends, and finds friendship (and more) in her mother's boyfriend. Maya tells her friend before she tells anyone else, and Maya's friend is the only one, save Maya's family and Amat, who believes Maya.

Another aspect of friendship should be studied as well. To further add to the discussion of rape culture, the friendship between teenage boys is also an important aspect. In all four films, virtually all boys at school believe the rapist, and not the victim. In the case of *Hip hip hora!*, the guilt cannot be questioned as there are numerous witnesses to the assault. Still, this inaction from everyone witnessing, is part of the rape culture. And the rape culture follows Mouse and the other teenage boys in his friend group, as they taunt Sebbe and call him gay because he is sexually inexperienced. Later, as Mouse gropes and violates Sofie, the other boys follow suit and pose for photos with the unconscious Sofie. In both *Björnstad* and *Säg att du älskar mig*, there are scenes with literal locker room talk that can be connected to rape culture. The day after the rape, in the locker room, Ville and Raddi taunt Lamin for being shaken by the events from last night. Here Ville dry humps Lamin's shoulder, and Raddi tells Lamin that Fatou wanted to have sex. In *Björnstad*, the locker room talk is presented before the rape, in the same episode. The teammates of Kevin watch a sex tape of an NHL star and his girlfriend, and

¹¹⁰ Eriksson, *(Re)producing a periphery*, 74.

accuse the girlfriend of posting the video. What follows, is a joke about one of the teammates only being able to have sex by raping a girl, and then the joke moves into him raping his mother.

Another thing the films have in common is the stylistic way of ostracising through graffiti, and its coding. Still, the scenes from the earlier films are different to the newer ones. In *Säg att du älskar mig*, Fatou finds her locker with the word "WHORE" (My translation, Figure 3) written on it, and is subsequently approached by a group of boys who intimidate Fatou and say that she is: "A whore who snitches on her people." This escalates with the boys pushing at Fatou and chasing her through the corridors. Fatou is only saved by this physical threat through entering the classroom where her teacher obviously tells Fatou that she is late for class. The boys who chased Fatou quietly move past Fatou's classroom, but leave the lingering threat hanging in the air. In Sofie's case, she finds a photo of her unconscious body on her locker, alongside the graffitied words: "Sofie in 7C = whore!" (My translation, Figure 4). After seeing the locker, she looks around, and sees a few boys snickering behind her, and she understands who did it. Later in the film, Sofie is shown to try to fix the graffiti by awkwardly changing the word "whore" to "best." Comparing these scenes, there is a clear difference in use of the trope. Sofie is subjected to bullying by these boys, whilst Fatou is subjected to physical threats. This, too, escalates for Fatou as she at a later date is ambushed by Raddi and Wille in the bathroom where Raddi threatens Fatou with a razor close to her eye to try to keep her from reporting the crime.



Figure 3. *Säg att du älskar mig* (Daniel Fridell, 2006). [Timestamp: 01:07:21]



Figure 4. *Hip hip hora!* (Teresa Fabik, 2004). [Timestamp: 00:25:59]

Maya is filmed with graffiti in an abandoned house that says “Maya is a WHORE” (My translation, Figure 5), which is the most peaceful scene of the four. The way the words are

behind Maya, blurred and without her reacting to them for the viewer, can be seen as both the way society sees her, as well as how Maya might be starting to see herself as the whole town is against her. With Jennifer, the graffiti is literally close to home, as it is spray-painted on her family's house. It is also the most aggressive graffiti of them all, where the vandalisers have written "WHURES [sic] SHOULD BE RAPED" (My translation. Figure 6). The misspelling is an interesting addition to the graffiti in *Flocken*. This, once again points to Northerners as uncivilised and brutal, as they are presented as not even being able to spell "whore" correctly.



Figure 5. *Björnstad*, Episode 5 (Peter Grönlund, 2020). [Timestamp: 00:05:51]



Figure 6. *Flocken* (Beata Gårdeler, 2015). [Timestamp: 01:16:13]

In all four films, a loneliness follows the victims. Maya has her whole family and her best friend to support her (not counting the lapse in Maya's father where he starts to doubt his daughter's sincerity). This ostracism is clearest at school where glares follow the victims. But it moves out into society in the newer films, as the families are all affected by the events that unfolded. The slander and graffiti move to abandoned houses and the victims' homes as a mob mentality grows within the smaller communities. Even the parents' jobs are in the newer material affected due to the rape charges, pointing to both a small mindedness and a communal affect taking place in the North.

Comparatively, the four films centre around representations of how relationships change due to sexual violence, as well as a societal impact on culture. In the older films, it is more about the individuals and their smaller circle of friends and family. In the newer teen films, the scope has expanded, and the stories are more about a culture that causes rape. This does not mean that a cultural aspect is void in the older teen films, as there are many scenes where rape culture is present, and that the viewer is supposed to feel that, for example, dressing a certain way does not mean that you want to have sex. Still, the newer ones try to point to how large and deep rooted the problems are, and that not only other teenagers and parents are distrustful of rape victims, but also people who are far removed from both victims and perpetrators.

Revenge or Resignation

How the teen films end can also point to larger societal aspects of representation. As presented above, the reactions and behaviour of those who surround the victims greatly affect them. In three of the films, suicide is used to point to the strains of being ostracised by their community. Fatou stands on a precipice, threatening to jump, and accusingly asks her mother if she knows what it's like to be raped. Sofie leaves her home after a fight with her father and finds her former best friend at a party with the popular girls, and boys who violated Sofie. This prompts Sofie to jump out of the window at said party, but survives the fall. Fatou's mother talks her daughter down from the edge of the roof and admits to being a bad mother before they embrace. Jennifer takes her mother's boyfriend's gun into the forest and almost takes her own life, but changes her mind at the last minute. Suicide is not part of Maya's story, but she rather wants to take revenge on her rapist.

The aspect of revenge or resignation is equally divided between the eras. In *Hip hip hora!* Sofie contemplates changing schools after her attempted suicide, and her father says he will support her choice either way. Then, Sofie sees that she has received several voicemails from her friends where they happily tell Sofie that they stood up for her against one of the popular girls. It is after this information has been given to Sofie that she changes her mind and decides to stay at her school after all. She consequently confronts the main instigator of her assault, Mouse, and embarrasses him in front of the whole school. Sofie becomes a hero and asserts her place at her school through the help of her friends and her own agency. Fatou, on the other hand, is not awarded the same ending. After Fatou reports her rapists she returns to her school to find that she is not a hero, but rather a: "A whore who snitches on her people," as one of the boys from her school puts it to her. The polarisation escalates the following weeks and reaches a tipping point after the rapists have been convicted. A fight ensues between those who support Fatou, and those who support her rapists. After the altercation has been stopped by personnel at school, the scene cuts to Fatou sitting in an office with her student councillor and what seemingly is Fatou's principal. The woman who seems to be a principal says: "I'm sorry but we have to do this." (My translation) This is followed by Fatou changing schools, and the viewer understands that the principal felt that the polarisation between Fatou's supporters and adversaries could only be resolved by Fatou leaving the school.

In the newer teen films, quiet resignation is part of Jennifer's arc. She, as mentioned above, ends the story by contemplating to, but not taking her own life. With the film cutting between Jennifer contemplating suicide with Alex raping Amanda, the story points to the never-ending story of teenage girls affected by rape and rape culture. In this case, her resignation is

followed by agency, and still attaches strength to Jennifer's character as she decides she wants to live. At the same time, Amanda is seen being raped, and losing her agency. Maya, on the other hand, just like Sofie, utilises revenge to end her story. After the rape charges have been dropped, Maya steals her friend's parents' gun, and chases Kevin through a snowy landscape. She threatens to kill him as he admits that he did rape her. Maya shoots the gun in the air, and Kevin wets his pants, giving Maya what she wants: revenge.

With these four endings, a few things can be said about representation. The fact that the two Northern films use guns to put an end to the girls' processing of being raped is not unnoticed, and once again points to a stereotypical version of Northerners presented. Through social class, the differences in last resorts is also present, as the middle class girl takes her revenge on her rapist, whilst the working class girl contemplates suicide, pointing to societal differences in what is possible for different people in Swedish society.

With the urban films, the differences in social class and race is seen in the way they are treated by society and school mates. At a school with mainly non-white students, fights happen, and threats are made. At a mainly white school, there are no threats, but rather bullying and ostracising. Still, the revenge is given to the white girl, and the loss of agency is handed to the black girl. The character Fatou has comparatively been treated quite different to her white counterparts, which can point to underlying racism that has affected the filmmakers of *Säg att du älskar mig*. The nail in the coffin for her is the way she is not given an ending where she takes charge of her future, which the other three are awarded.

Change and Continuity

Although a one-to-one connection between legislation, public debate and films produced is hard to do, there are still aspects of this study that point to how a changing society prompts new ways of telling the same stories. Despite their research pertaining to media studies, Balbi and Magudda's concept of change and continuity can also be applied to this study. In Sweden, the stories about teenage girls being subjected to sexual assault has continued to be produced over the course of the 20 years that this study covers. Still, the changes are there, and can be connected to changes in public opinion and debate.

With the older films, there had been a feminist wave in the 1990s, alongside the changes in policies for funding of film in Sweden. This interaction can be seen in the girl power that is brought from the 1990s into these films. In both Fatou's and Sofie's rooms, they have posters of their female heroes, alongside their teddybears and cute pillows and throw blankets. As a

stylistic method, both Fatou and Sofie are given a scene where they remove their childish things and posters, pointing to how the assault has stolen their childhood. This is in line with the sexualisation that the characters are subjected to, which is a prominent discussion throughout the films. The neoliberal aspects of girl power and individualisation that Heta Mulari discusses in her research can explain these aspects, as Fatou and Sofie lose both friends and their parents' respect, and prompts them trying to handle the situation on their own.

With the newer teen films, the connection to high profile rape cases, and the public debate of consent laws is, as seen in the graphs from the Historical Context chapter, heavily connected to rape culture. These aspects interact with the stories as they are not only about the individuals that are violated, but also gives insight to the rapists, as well as others in society. By pointing to how it all interacts, the representation these films create take yet another step towards saying that it is not the victim's fault. In the 2000s, the focus was on how sexuality shouldn't allow for people taking advantage of someone. This is still about the individual, but in the way that others project the fault onto the victim because of how they dress and behave. The films never blame the girls for the assault, but say that others blame the girls because of how they dress and behave. In the 2010s, the blame is no longer placed on the victim's clothes, but rather try to point to that women who report rape are rarely believed, and even more rarely able to convict their rapists. These stories are more about the rape culture, and how it all connects. As culture interacts with the ever-evolving public debate and legislation, and sees new aspects of why women are subjected to sexual assault, so will the films evolve.

With a neoliberal view of individuals taking charge of their lives, Sofie fits the bill. Fatou, on the other hand, only somewhat does so. Sofie is cheered for standing up to Mouse, but Fatou is threatened for reporting Raddi and Ville. Although the rape culture is present in the older films, it is more pronounced in the newer films. Social media, side characters and jeopardising parents' jobs all point to how accusing someone of rape will affect many more than just your schoolmates and parents' respect for you. Arguably, the addition of setting the stories in rural small towns makes this aspect easier as the notion of "everyone knows everyone," exists in such places. Still, even in bigger cities, rumours will emerge and relationships will be affected outside of the school hallways.

Conclusion

In this thesis, an analysis of the material *Hip hip hora!*, *Säg att du älskar mig*, *Flocken* and *Björnstad* have all contributed to a deeper understanding of the representation of teen girls subjected to sexual violence on film. From an intersectional perspective, there are clear differences in the way the stories have been written and executed. They are not only guided by axes of oppression such as race and social class, but also the contemporary public debate and legislative changes in society.

The waves of new theories being reimagined and restructured shows that culture evolves just as laws do. In this study, the waves of depicting sexual assault against teenage girls are defined as more individualistic from the 2000s, and more holistic from the 2010s. This division erases the intersectional aspects, though, as the depictions share similarities when it comes to, for example, social class and race across the decades. Therefore, some things can be said to have developed, whilst other things still have a long way to go to represent a more inclusive scope of stories about teenage girls being subjected to sexual assault in Swedish film.

These films point to, not only the way society views sexual violence against teenage girls, but also carry and reinforce norms that affect representation and the creation of meaning within Swedish society. Northerners are shown to be more crude and brutal than their urban neighbours. Non-white characters carry the brunt of the level of violence in these films. Working class characters are seen as less sophisticated than middle-class. These representations are not only seen by comparing these films, but also interacts with a larger context that overlaps and weaves into other facets of society.

The interaction with contemporary society is seen in both the stories themselves, as well as the filmmakers' interviews where they all claim to have been inspired by events in real life. The changes are mainly connected to whose stories are being told. In the 2000s, it's mainly the victim's story. In the 2010s, it's everyone's story. Instead of only highlighting the victim's journey, the perpetrator's, the parents', and even relatively disconnected characters' stories are highlighted to show an even larger impact that sexual violence might create in real life, such as it did in Bjästa.

Overall, the meanings represented through these cultural artefacts, point to how society somewhat places blame on teenage girls when being subjected to sexual violence. These films aim to, as the paradox presented by Projansky, stop rape, but at the same time reinforce the stereotypes that are connected to these acts. As Spallacci wrote, the way the viewer witnesses the acts of violence gives the audience the reassurance that the act has happened. But with the

changes in narrative choices over time, the perpetrator has been given more backstory, and subsequently empathy. This ties in with the popularity of the theory of rape culture that has developed over time, and therefore places the blame on not only the boys who commit the crime, but also the society that shapes them. In short, the “boys will be boys” idiom has changed into “society will be society,” showcasing a deeply rooted problem in the fabric of society that allows for this to go on.

This study is by no means exhaustive of the subject, and raises many more ideas that can broaden the research field. The depiction of teenage Northerners, and Northerners overall, can point to other differences between the urban and rural than have been brought up here. In the same way, the depiction of non-white and white teenagers can also be studied. Or an investigation into queerness in teen films or a Northern context. Lastly, the research field could benefit from further studies of the contents of worksheets produced by the Swedish Film Institute, to see what they aim to do for democratisation on an intersectional level. To be able to see a larger scope of representation, intersectional approaches are always encouraged.

Bibliography

Books and chapters

- Balbi, Gabriele, and Magaouda, Paul. *A History of Digital Media – An intermedia and global perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. New York: New Press, 2012.
- Doughty, Ruth & Etherington-Wright, Christine. *Understanding film theory*. London: Palgrave, Second edition, 2018.
- Gaines, Jane. "White privilege and looking relations: race and gender in feminist film theory." In *Visual culture: The Reader*, edited by Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, 402 – 410. Sage publications, 1999.
- Gustafsson, Tommy. "Ett steg på vägen mot en ny jämlikhet?: Könrelationer och stereotyper i ung svensk ungdomsfilm på 2000-talet." In *Solskenslandet: Svensk Film På 2000-Talet*, edited by Erik Hedling, and Ann-Kristin Wallengren. 171-193. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006.
- Hall, Stuart. "Introduction." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 1-12. London: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 13-74. London: Sage Publications, 1997.
- hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press, 1981.
- McRobbie, Angela, and Garber, Jenny. "Girls and Subcultures," In *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, edited by Stuart Hall, and Tony Jefferson, 177-189. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- McRobbie, Angela. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009.
- Midden, Eva. "The arena of religion: Malala and contemporary feminism." In *Doing gender in media, art and culture: a comprehensive guide to gender studies*, edited by Rosemarie Buikema, Liedeke Plate, and Kathrin Thiele, 24-35. London: Routledge Second edition., 2018.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Introduction: 1970s Feminist Film Theory and the Obsolescent Object." In: *Feminisms – Diversity, Difference, and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Studies*, edited by Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers, 17-26. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.
- Nauwerk, Malin. "Var går gränsen." In *Sexualpolitiska nyckeltexter*, edited by Klara Arnberg, Pia Laskar and Fia Sundevall, 434 – 435. Stockholm: Leopard, 2015.
- Phillips, Nickie D. *Beyond Blurred Lines: Rape Culture in Popular Media*. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Projansky, Sarah. *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*. New York: NYU Press, 2001.
- Wallengren, Ann-Kristin. "Kultur och okultur: bilden av landsbygdens folk." In *Solskenslandet: Svensk Film På 2000-Talet*, edited by Erik Hedling, and Ann-Kristin Wallengren, 51-80. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006.

Witt-Brattström, Ebba. "Feministiska perspektiv på sexualpolitik." In *Sexualpolitiska nyckeltexter*, edited by Klara Arnberg, Pia Laskar and Fia Sundevall, 436 – 444. Stockholm: Leopard, 2015.

Dissertations and Theses

- Barin Jansson, Tomac. "'Hade jag varit kvinna hade du legat jävligt risigt till...' – En symtomatisk studie om män och manlighet inom svensk filmproduktion under 90- och 00-talen," BA, Lund University, 2011.
- Dahne, Lovisa, and Matthis, Alexi. "Det klassiska berättandet i det moderna Sverige: En kvalitativ analys av den moderna svenskproducerade filmens användning av det klassiska berättandets dramaturgi," BA, University of Dalarna, 2016.
- Eriksson, Madeleine. *(Re)producing a periphery – Popular representations of the Swedish North*, PhD diss., Umeå University, 2010.
- Mulari, Heta. *New Feminisms, Gender Equality and Neoliberalism in Swedish Girl Films, 1995-2006*, PhD diss., University of Turku, 2015.
- Nilsson, Ella. "'The Following episode contains scenes that some may find disturbing' – Representationen av våldtäkt i *13 Reasons Why* och *Björnstad*," BA, Linköping University, 2021.
- Pallas, Hynek. *Vithet i svensk spelfilm 1989-2010*. PhD diss., Stockholm University, 2011.
- Rothén, Jessica. "Att göra en Bjästa – En textanalys om skuldbeläggningen av ett våldtäktsoffer," BA, Linnaeus University, 2016.

Articles

- Berridge, Susan. "Teen Heroine TV: Narrative Complexity and Sexual Violence in Female-Fronted Teen Drama Series." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 11, no. 4 (2013): 477-496.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139 – 168.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18.
- Neely, Sol. "Ruined Abjection and Allegory in *Deadgirl*." *Screen Bodies* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2016): 4-24.
- Nelson, Elissa H. "The New Old Face of a Genre: The Franchise Teen Film as Industry Strategy." *Cinema Journal* 57, no. 1 (Fall 2017): 125-133.
- Nowell, Richard. "'For girls': Hollywood, The Date Movie Market, and Early-1980s Teen Sex Comedies." *Post Script* 34, no.1 (Fall 2014): 16-34.
- Ragester, Charlene. "Monstrous Mother, Incestuous Father, and Terrorized Teen: Reading *Precious* as a Horror Film." *Journal of Film and Video* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 30-45.
- Shary, Timothy. "Course file for 'Film Genres and the Image of Youth'." *Journal of Film and Video* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 39-57.
- Spallacci, Amanda. "Representing Rape Trauma in Film: Moving Beyond the Event." *Arts* 8, no. 8 (2019): 1-11.

News articles and webpages

- Borås bibliotek. "Björnstadstrilogin". *Borås bibliotek*, (N/A).
<https://bibliotek.boras.se/sv/review/bj%C3%B6rnstadstrilogin>
- Ehrenberg, Johan. "Alla män ansvarar för våldtäkterna," *Aftonbladet*, December 1, 2003.
<https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/bKgJg/alla-man-ansvarar-for-valdtakterna>
- Fabik, Teresa. "Jag kände mig alltid som ett ufo," *Aftonbladet*, May 1, 2004.
<https://www.aftonbladet.se/relationer/a/A2P9Qj/jag-kande-mig-alltid-som-ett-ufo>
- Guillou, Jan. "Jag skulle gärna se att *Flocken* fälls", *Aftonbladet*, September 15, 2015.
<https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/a/0EgqLg/jag-skulle-garna-se-att-flocken-falls>
- Heller-Nicholas, Alexandra. "Shame," *Metro and Screen Education Magazines*. 2019.
- Mannheimer, Edgar. "Regeringen lägger fram förslag om samtyckeslag," *SVT nyheter*, December 17, 2017. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/uppgifter-regeringen-infor-samtyckeslagen>
- Micic, Mira. "Bjöd in våldtäktsman – får inte sparken," *Aftonbladet*, June 10, 2010.
<https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/a2vaqa/bjod-in-valdtaktsman-far-inte-sparken>
- Parker, Robin. "Championing the teen voice." *Broadcast*, October 24, 2013.
<http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/championing-teen-voice/docview/1444656696/se-2>
- Scott, Matthew. "Britain's Consent Laws are a Mess," *The Spectator*, July 28, 2020.
<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/britain-s-consent-laws-are-a-mess/>
- UN Women. "16 Ways You Can Stand Against Rape Culture," *UN Women*, 2019.
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/11/compilation-ways-you-can-stand-against-rape-culture>
- Unknown. "Författarintervju: Fredrik Backman," *Midnattsord*, November 3, 2016.
<http://midnattsord.blogspot.com/2016/11/forfattarintervju-fredrik-backman.html>
- Vardagsrasismen. "Våldtäktskulturen och kvinnan," *Vardagsrasismen*, 2014.
<https://vardagsrasismen.com/2014/04/04/valdtaktskulturen-och-kvinnan/>
- Wikipedia. "Tarana Burke," *Wikipedia*, (N/A). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarana_Burke
- Wikipedia. "Northern England", *Wikipedia*, (N/A).
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_England

Legislation and miscellaneous

- Åklagarmyndigheten. "The Assange Matter," *Åklagarmyndigheten*, 2019.
<https://www.aklagare.se/en/media/press-service/the-assange-matter/>
- Breitenstein, Kristin, and Hoffsten, Andreas. "Hip hip hora!," *Svenska filminstitutet*, (N/A)
<https://www.filminstitutet.se/contentassets/206bf09269b7429b95d0edf2702e15e9/hip-hip-hora.pdf> ;
- England and Wales High Court. "[2011] EWHC 2849", *England and Wales High Court (Administrative Court) Decisions*, 2011. [https://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2011/2849.html&query=\(title:\(+Assange+\)\)](https://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2011/2849.html&query=(title:(+Assange+)))

- Hedelius, Anna. "Säg att du älskar mig," Svenska filminstitutet, (N/A),
https://www.filminstitutet.se/contentassets/2049afc653ea461da7762c7e1ac39e98/sag_at_t_du_alskar_mig.pdf
- Holmberg, Stina, and Lewenhagen, Lars. "Den nya samtyckeslagen i praktiken,"
Brottsförebyggande rådet. 2020. <https://bra.se/publikationer/arkiv/publikationer/2020-06-15-den-nya-samtyckeslagen-i-praktiken.html>
- Lagerström, Louise. "Flocken," Svenska filminstitutet, 2016.
<https://www.filminstitutet.se/contentassets/00e86f5bea4d47ff9de6d6554101969c/flocken2.pdf>
- Regeringen. "Kvinnofrid – Proposition 1997/98:55," *Sveriges Riksdag*. 1998.
https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/proposition/kvinnofrid_GL0355

Films and TV-shows

- Redmond, Phil, creator. *Hollyoaks*. Channel 4, 1995-.
- Bagher, Reza, director. *Vingar av glas*. Chimney Pot, 2000.
- Daniels, Lee, director. *Precious*. Lionsgate, 2009.
- Fabik, Teresa, director. *Hip hip hora!*. Filmlance International AB, 2004.
- Fridell, Daniel, director. *Säg att du älskar mig*. Filmpool Nord, 2006.
- Grönlund, Peter, director. *Björnstad*. Filmlance international AB, 2020.
- Gårdeler, Beata, director. *Flocken*. 2afilm, 2015.
- Jodrell, Steve, director. *Shame*. Barron Entertainment, 1987.
- Moodysson, Lukas, director. *Fucking Åmål* (English title: *Show Me Love*). Memfis Film, 1998.
- Sundvall, Kjell, director. *Jägarna* (English translation: *The Hunters*). FilmTeknik, 1996.
- Waters, Mark, director. *Freaky Friday*. Casual Friday Productions, 2003.
- Yorkey, Brian, creator. *13 Reasons Why*. July Moon Productions, 2017.