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Author(s): Westinen, Elina

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“Still alive, nigga”:

**Multisemiotic constructions of self as Other
in Finnish rap music videos**

Elina Westinen

1 INTRODUCTION

Hip hop culture, with its multicultural roots and global appeal, has traditionally given many marginalized people, including minorities, a voice, affordances and resources (e.g., Rose, 1994; Mitchell, 2001) to discuss not only personal but also societal issues and challenges, often relating to intricate questions of identity. In stereotypically (ethnically) homogeneous Finland (e.g., Häkkinen & Tervonen, 2005), where rap artists with an immigrant background have recently become increasingly popular and visible, emergent migrant rap expresses and highlights these ‘new’ voices and discourses. Indeed, hip hop culture has become a channel for the discussion of various aspects of multiculturalism. In 2008, Finland had the lowest relative proportion of foreign-origin citizens of any Western European state (Vasileva, 2009). This situation has recently changed markedly: in 2000, about 17,000 immigrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds moved to Finland, while in 2014 the number was almost double (c. 31,500) (Statistics Finland, 2016). Increased migration has resulted in public debates on issues such as multiculturalism, integration and racism. The resulting, polarized discourses of the Other “not only reflect but help to constitute hierarchies between nations and ethnic groups”, while becoming essentially rooted into everyday communication between people of different ethnicities (Bradley, 1996, p. 132).

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As Finland is diversifying, it is important to study how (im)migrants themselves experience and communicate about these issues. This chapter explores the multisemiotic and polycentric construction of the self as Other in social media, in the specific context of Finnish hip hop (see also Westinen in press). Here, identity is conceptualized as *identification* (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Leppänen, Kytölä, Jousmäki, Peuronen, & Westinen, 2014), as constantly evolving, negotiated and constructed in relation to others. Theoretically and methodologically, I draw on insights from recent sociolinguistic work on globalization and superdiversity (e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011), the semiotic approach to the study of multimodality (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]), and global hip hop studies (e.g., Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009; Pennycook, 2007).

The data comprise two Finnish rap music videos: “Salil eka, salil vika” (‘First at the gym, last at the gym’) by Musta Barbaari (Black Barbarian) and “Prinssille morsian” (‘A bride for the prince’) by Prinssi Jusuf (Prince Jusuf). Because Finland and Finnish hip hop are still ethnically relatively homogeneous, these two ‘Black’ artists and entertainers need to negotiate their role in society, and in the hip hop scene, through various polycentric (dis)identification processes, some of which draw on (yet also run counter to) ‘traditional’ identity categories such as ethnicity.¹ In doing this, they engage in discourses of discrimination but also of tolerance; their multisemiotic communication is thus highly multi-voiced and, at times, also ironic, drawing on gendered and racialized *stereotypes*, i.e., representations of unified and simplistic characteristics of individuals or groups (Hall, 1997). Finland as a macro context for this study is illustrative of countries where (large-scale) immigration has not been an integral part of the country’s recent history² and where negotiation of belonging and (dis)identification is yet to take place: who belongs where (or

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who (dis)identifies with which place/culture/people/etc.), how, and on what grounds. One important venue for this is popular culture, as the analysis will show. Before that, however, I will discuss (dis)identification, otherness, Finnish hip hop culture and music videos, along with the methodological framework.

2 SETTING THE SCENES

2.1 (DIS)IDENTIFICATION AND OTHERNESS

As Castells (2010) has aptly argued, in this globalized period where organizations, institutions, movements, and expressions are continuously deconstructed, “identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only, source of meaning” (p. 3). Following Brubaker and Cooper (2000, pp. 14–21), I draw on the notion of *(dis)identification* – affiliation, belonging, communality vs. differentiation and exclusion – rather than ‘identity’, since the former emphasizes identity making as a fluid and active process, instead of a fixed and stable entity. As in physical social environments, people communicating in digital environments need to construct themselves as particular kind(s) of people (Leppänen et al., 2014, p. 114; see also Tagg & Seargeant, this volume). Brubaker and Cooper (2000) distinguish two types of identification processes: *relational* identification, denoting the relationship one has with others, and *categorical* identification, indicating membership of a particular category, such as race, ethnicity, language or nationality. However, as Blommaert (2005, p. 205) argues, to be properly established, identities need to be *recognized* by others. While we can often choose from among the multiplicity of available identities those we wish to ‘inhabit’ at any particular moment, ‘ascribed’ identities, particularly ‘permanent’ ones relating to age, class, gender and race, sometimes position us in ways contrary to our wishes. According to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), seeing identification (also) in relation to ‘situated subjectivity’ suggests that we understand who we are, our social locations and our capability to act in a certain way in

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our social surroundings. Moreover, *commonality* (sharing something with others), *connectedness* (relational ties one has with others) and *groupness* (which ensues from commonality and connectedness, denoting a sense of belonging to a particular group or even a nation) are crucial for one's (dis)identification work. (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 14–21.)

Otherness is linked to *disidentification*, people's desire to differentiate and separate themselves from the Other, i.e., other people (or more abstract entities) who are dissimilar to them. Drawing on Riggins (1997), Jaworski and Coupland (2005, p. 672) characterize the Other as a “stereotyped, dehumanized, diminished, inferior, odd, irrational, exoticized, and evil other, an other which is also possibly desired, not least through eroticization” (for exoticization and eroticization of the Other, see also Leppänen & Elo, 2016). Othering, then, refers to the processes of objectification, stereotyping, naturalization and/or essentialization (Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). According to Blommaert and Verschueren (1998, p. 19), we “reconstruct the other in terms of our own categories, expectations, habits and norms”. Deviation from these, ‘abnormality’, is an ‘essential property’ of the other. For instance, when we characterize Africans as ‘lazy’ (as seen in the examples below), we use “as our measure the assumption that we normally embody diligence, tenacity and dynamism” (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 19). Migrants, my case in point here, are often seen as strangers, as Other. But, as Ahmed (200, p. 78) emphasizes, migrants should be understood in terms of their *complex* life histories and spatial, cultural and social belonging. Here, thinking along the lines of *superdiversity*, i.e., the diversification of diversity across variables such as ethnicity, origins and religion (Vertovec, 2007; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Arnaut, Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2016), becomes helpful: we cannot

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assume people's complex and multifaceted (dis)identifications based on such variables; rather, we need to explore them.

2.2 HIP HOP IN FINLAND

Hip hop culture is currently one of the most popular and significant youth and music cultures worldwide (see e.g., Mitchell, 2001) and an excellent example of ongoing globalization processes and *transcultural flows* (Pennycook, 2007), showcasing how the global and the local meet and mix in numerous ways. Notwithstanding this global dimension, hip hop always takes a local shape and uses local expression (see e.g., Westinen, 2014). Hip hop elements (rap, graffiti, breakdancing) are important sites for complex and multifaceted identification work for youth everywhere, via various semiotic resources (Pennycook, 2007; Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009). Despite the abundance of studies on hip hop and its local contexts (e.g., Mitchell, 2001; Alim et al., 2009; Terkourafi, 2010), research on Finnish hip hop remains scarce, particularly in sociolinguistics (but see Kalliokoski, 2006; Leppänen & Pietikäinen, 2010; Westinen, 2014). Moreover, Finnish hip hop has not yet been extensively investigated in digital contexts (but see Leppänen et al., 2014; Tervo, 2014); also internationally, online research is just emerging (for China, see Varis & Wang, 2011; for Germany, see Androutsopoulos, 2009).

Hip hop culture and rap music, in particular, are currently extremely popular in Finland. The meaningfulness of rap as a music genre in Finland (Paleface, 2011; Westinen, 2014) is testified, for instance, by the visibility of rappers in the mainstream media, digital downloads, radio play, and numbers of gigs in various live venues. Rap artists with a(n) (im)migrant background (born in or outside Finland; with one or no 'ethnic Finnish' parent(s)) are a fairly recent addition to this genre (though not entirely without antecedents; see e.g., Paleface,

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2011). Roughly since 2010, such young people have become active in the Finnish hip hop scene. While at first most chose English as their rap language (e.g., Noah Kin), more recently, artists such as Musta Barbaari and Prinssi Jusuf, along with Kevin Tandu and Toinen Kadunpoika ('Another'/'The Other Street Kid') have 'represented' (mostly) Finnish-language rap. Finland is, in fact, lagging behind many European countries in terms of (im)migrant-background rap (Jansson, 2011, p. 26): in Finland, such rappers are still often seen as 'exotic exceptions' whereas elsewhere, most notably in the multicultural societies of France (see e.g., Prévost, 2001) and Germany (e.g., Androutsopoulos, 2010), they have always been an integral part of the local scene. Furthermore, research on rap artists with an immigrant background is still largely absent in Finland (but see Westinen, in press).

In the context of global (and particularly 'original' American) hip hop culture, 'Whiteness', usually the unmarked, invisible category – i.e., the norm – against which other ethnic categorizations are measured (e.g., Lipsitz, 1995; Dyer, 1997), often becomes visible and marked (Cutler, 2003, p. 229), i.e., the Other. 'Blackness', in turn, stereotypically "emerges as normative and authentic" (Cutler, 2003, p. 229). The (multimodal and/or discursive) (co-)construction of Blackness and Whiteness is most notable in the specific context of rap battles (see e.g., Williams & Stroud (2015) on 'normative' and unmarked Whiteness in South Africa; and Cutler (2009) on the co-construction of Whiteness). In Finland, until recently, 'race' or 'ethnicity' were not particularly prominent rap topics, perhaps because 'Whiteness' has been (stereo)typically unmarked in Finnish society (e.g., Rastas, 2005; Toivanen, 2014), although some lyrics have dealt with how a 'White' kid can participate in the culture and make 'credible' rap music.

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Due to the relative ‘Whiteness’ of Finnish society and hip hop, the new, up-and-coming ‘Black’ artists need to negotiate their role and status in the already established scene. While doing so, they also bring new voices into the picture and ‘talk back’ (hooks 1989)³ from their marginalized minority positions. They can, however, claim ‘stereotypical authenticity’ *vis-à-vis* the ‘original’ US hip hop culture in terms of their skin color (naturally, their social and cultural backgrounds and experiences can also contribute to their ‘realness’). In making use of their (assigned and assumed) role as the Other, Musta Barbaari and Prinssi Jusuf simultaneously draw on and play around with ‘Blackness’ within the context of Finland and hip hop culture (see also Westinen, in press).

2.3 HIP HOP MUSIC VIDEO RESEARCH

The advent of MTV (est. 1981) promoted the wide (global) exposure and circulation of music videos (e.g., Kärjä, 2007). During the ‘golden years’ of music videos, roughly 1985–1996, they were an essential part of the record company structures and marketing (Edmond, 2014, p. 306). Many of the ‘classics’ of music video research (Kaplan, 1987; Goodwin, 1992) also naturally date back to this period. Much of this research has focused on the video *content* by, for instance, counting the number of occurrences of specific themes. Rap music videos have most notably been examined from the viewpoints of gender, race, violence (against women) and sexual imagery (e.g., Armstrong, 2001; Smith, 2005).

During the 2000s, the production and distribution of music videos has changed. They have found a ‘new life’: one of the most significant changes has been from a “mainly televisual model of exhibition to one based on the searchable, on-demand nature of Internet browsing” (Edmond, 2014, p. 311). Thus far, surprisingly little has been written about music videos online (but see e.g., Vernallis, 2010; Edmond, 2014), despite their popularity on many video

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aggregates and social media sites such as YouTube (see Burgess & Green, 2009, for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary account on YouTube), where they are uploaded, watched and shared by audiences of millions. The term ‘music video’ can now denote a very large range of music video-style content, encountered on numerous media sites (Edmond, 2014, p. 313) and the whole music video culture currently includes more (accessible) opportunities for participation as well user-generated content (ibid., p. 314).

In Finland, music videos can be regarded as a turn-of-the-millennium phenomenon, when they were shown by various production support systems and television programs (Kärjä, 2007, p. 190). With a few exceptions, (online) rap music videos have not yet been extensively explored. Tervo (2014; see also Tervo & Ridanpää, 2016) has analyzed the spatiality, localization and globalization of Finnish rap music videos and I have conducted a concise, multimodal analysis of Ruudolf and Karri Koira’s music video “Mammat riivaa” (‘The chicks are harassing us’) deploying the concepts of entextualization and resemiotization (see Leppänen et al., 2014, pp. 127–131).

Kärjä’s (2007, p. 201; see also Kärjä, 2005) term *secured Otherness* (in Finnish: ‘turvallinen toiseus’; can also be translated ‘safe Otherness’) refers to how the visuals of music videos tend to rely more on already ‘known’ and spreading representations in various areas of popular culture than on local representations and characters arising, for example, from the current Finnish sociocultural contexts. Significantly, Kärjä (2007, p. 196) notes how in the early- and mid-1990s, ‘Black’ people were more like visual ‘elements’, part of the visual conventions of videos; ten years later, a few people were already performing the music. Thus, while ‘secured’ Otherness perhaps used to be the default mode of Finnish (rap) music videos, nowadays more and more people of immigrant origin are taking center stage.

3 KEY APPROACHES AND PROTAGONISTS

3.1 APPROACHES AND CONCEPTS

Sociolinguistics of globalization

The sociolinguistics of globalization and late modernity (e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook, 2007) examines the flows and mobility of people, language, discourse(s) and culture. According to Blommaert (2010, p. 42), in an age of globalization, sociolinguistic phenomena need to be understood within a given context, “where different orders of indexicality dominate, resulting in a polycentric ‘context’ where communicative behavior is simultaneously pushed and pulled in various directions”.

The focus here is on the multisemiotic resources rappers utilize in their music videos and how, via these resources, they orient to various centers of normativity. *Polycentricity* is a key characteristic of human communication: when communicating with others, we always necessarily orient towards and behave with reference to various centers of norms (Blommaert, 2005, 2010). These centers can be individuals (e.g., the most popular rap act of the local scene), institutions (e.g., Finnish social services) or abstract entities (e.g., Finland as a nation state) (Blommaert, 2010; Westinen, 2014). Like any other (local) hip hop culture, Finnish hip hop can be seen as a polycentric complex, in which artists, fans and other cultural actors orient not towards one ‘central’ set of meaningful (indexical) diacritics but to multiple (norm-providing) ‘centers’.

The concept of *resources* comprises not only linguistic (the ‘little bits’ of language people use in actual, sociocultural contexts, such as features of varieties, dialects or slang; Blommaert, 2010) and discursive (e.g., discourses, narratives, cultural references) resources but a whole *repertoire* of semiotic resources, such as embodied, visual and aural (i.e., body, clothing, still

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and moving image, audio and music). Blommaert and Rampton (2011, drawing on Scollon & Scollon and on Kress) have, in fact, suggested shifting away from “‘language’ in the strict sense towards semiosis as our focus of inquiry” and from “‘linguistics’ towards a new sociolinguistically informed semiotics as our disciplinary space”. In analyzing the languages of hip hop, Alim (2009, p. 16) has encouraged a move “beyond structure to a broader semiotic, multimodal system of representation”, to be discussed next.

Multimodal study of music videos

By drawing on insights from the social semiotic approach to the study of multimodality (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]; Burn & Parker, 2003), I will examine how the two rappers communicate and construct Otherness in their music videos by utilizing and combining various modes. According to this theory, people always have an interest, a motivation or a need to communicate, whether it is to represent something in the ‘real’ world or to make connections with other people; this communication depends on both the available semiotic resources and the social and cultural contexts (Burn & Parker, 2003, p. 5). A *mode* is “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” (Kress, 2010, p. 79), such as (moving) image, writing, speech, layout, music, gesture and soundtrack. Kress (2010, p. 59) argues that the social semiotic approach facilitates learning about interest and agency, (resources in) meaning(-making) and the meaning potentials of cultural/semiotic forms.

Selecting a particular mode for constructing meanings also includes its affordances and limitations (Burn & Parker, 2003, p. 7). Therefore, in music video making, producers and artists can take into account the semiotic potential of each mode (and their combination), their specific sociocultural context and the affordances offered by the format of a YouTube

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music video for the construction of their message (Kress, 2010, p. 137), which, apart from gaining publicity for themselves and their genre, may also serve their specific cause (here, tolerance and anti-racism). Alongside *signification*, i.e., how texts create meanings and how these meanings are constituted by various resources, such as language, image, sound and gesture, Burn and Parker (2003, p. 3) further emphasize the importance of integrating the analysis of texts with the larger political, economic and social contexts of their production, an issue also examined here.

For the (multimodal) examination of music videos, Shuker (1994), drawing on film studies, offers 'classic', yet currently relevant aspects. As different music styles make use of different video conventions, we need to examine these two rap music videos for: 1) Mood: how music, lyrics and visual elements contribute to a certain mood or feeling; 2) Narrative structure: a clearly defined story vs non-linear sequences; 3) Setting/environment: realist vs fantasy-like; 4) Themes: e.g., love, political and social consciousness; 5) Importance of performance: the 'matching' of the format and the music genre; 6) Modes of sexuality: portrayal of women/men/androgynous characters, homo/hetero eroticism, mixing gender roles, etc.; 7) Star texts: comparison of the role of the performer in the video with their star persona, in general; and 8) Music: the comparison and juxtaposition of what we hear and see, i.e., how does the visual relate to the aural? (for music video analysis, see also e.g., Vernallis, 2004; Kärjä, 2007). All these aspects contribute to understanding the particular nature of the multisemiotic and polycentric construction of (dis)identification in these rap music videos, as illustrative of ('Black') Otherness in a (stereo)typically ethnically homogeneous Finland.

3.2 PROTAGONISTS AND DATA

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The social media data studied comprise two YouTube music videos: “Salil eka, salil vika” (‘First at the gym, last at the gym’) by Musta Barbaari and “Prinssille morsian” (‘A bride for the prince’) by Prinssi Jusuf.⁴ Social media, defined here broadly as online environments which enable social interaction (Baym, 2011; Leppänen et al., 2014), create affordances for multimodal meaning-making (e.g., Leppänen et al., 2009; 2014) and for performing celebrity (e.g., Marwick & boyd, 2011). Social media sites are nowadays increasingly significant for celebrities, as they “chang[e] celebrity culture, the ways that people relate to celebrity images, how celebrities are produced, and how celebrity is practiced” (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 139), while enabling them to achieve and sustain (a sudden) visibility and popularity. YouTube, a participatory cultural site (see Burgess & Green, 2009), offers artists a digital, multimodal environment for constructing their ‘image’ and ‘identity’ and a (potentially) large audience, who can participate by, for example, watching videos and commenting on them, but also creating and uploading their own new versions of the ‘original’ ones. In investigating social actions in the web and social media, we need to also take into account the highly polycentric nature of the web (e.g., Varis & Wang, 2011; Leppänen et al., 2014; Kytölä & Westinen, 2015) in that multimodal communication always orients to various centers of norms. It is also important to emphasize the *intertwining* of physical and digital lives, communication and resources; social media should not be seen as separate and separable from ‘real’ life (see e.g., Stæhr, 2014).

Like other Finnish rap artists, Musta Barbaari and Prinssi Jusuf have an active presence online (see also Westinen in print) – it is, therefore, justified to explore their actions and communication also in digital settings. Musta Barbaari (hereafter MB) was born in Turku, Finland, in 1990 and currently lives in Helsinki. He was raised by his Tanzanian mother and has a Finnish father (Musta Barbaari & Takamaa, 2014). His self-chosen, highly ironic artist

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name indexes his race, ‘primitivity’ and ‘wildness’ when compared to and from the viewpoint of Westerners (see also Bradley, 1996, p. 116; Hall, 1995). MB found rap music as a child, through the late US rapper 2pac (Musta Barbaari & Takamaa, 2014, p. 17); his story, lyrics and flow continue to be inspirational for MB, as the song under investigation and several references to him in (social) media show. In addition to “Salil eka, salil vika”, he has since published one song and video, titled “Kuka pelkää pimeet” (‘Who’s afraid of the dark’) (2015). The ‘hype’ around this rap act has been considerable, both on- and offline. Prinssi Jusuf (hereafter PJ) was born in Ethiopia and moved to Finland with his parents at the age of two. He has thus far published two songs and music videos: “Prinssille morsian” and “Uff veli” (‘Uff brother’). He is well known for his role as MB’s ‘hype man’ but he also raps in a Christian rap group called *Pastorit* (Pastors). The two also share a residence.

Initially, both MB and PJ became known for an online series entitled *Taru Painojen Herrasta* (‘The Lord of the Weights’) (2013–)⁵ the title of which makes use of and modifies the Finnish name for the book and film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, focusing (unsurprisingly) on issues of bodybuilding but also, significantly, on raising awareness of racism. Thus, through this six-episode series on YouTube, they had already gained popularity on this social media site before their actual rap acts. They have also sought to combat racism by, for example, visiting schools and appearing at various events.

4 MULTISEMIOTIC RAP MUSIC VIDEOS @ YOUTUBE

In this section, I analyze two Finnish rap music videos by examining their multisemiotic resources and polycentricity and how these contribute to the construction of Otherness. In addition to a close sociolinguistic and multimodal analysis, my interpretations are also based

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on long-term, ethnographically oriented observation on Finnish hip hop (Westinen, 2014; see also Lehtonen, this volume; Kytölä, this volume).

4.1 “FIRST AT THE GYM, LAST AT THE GYM”

The music video “Salil eka, salil vika” was published on MB’s channel on YouTube August 20, 2013 and has thus far attracted 5.01 million views (as of June 20, 2016). The title of the song refers to hard working out at the gym: one needs to be the first to arrive, and the last to leave. As can be expected, the lyrics describe the life of fitness MB is leading, but also raise the issue of (im)migrants and their role in Finnish society.

[enter here: FIGURE 13.1: The MB logo]

In terms of the video’s *visual resources*, at the beginning, immediately when the music starts with the chorus, we see the MB logo, consisting of a white fist, holding a white dumbbell, on a black background. After a few seconds, the background changes and we see (mostly) ‘Black’ fists in the air, moving back and forth to the rhythm of the song (see Figure 13.1). The logo can be seen as *resemiotizing* the iconic the Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. Resemiotization (Iedema, 2003; Scollon & Scollon, 2004) focuses on “the examination of the unfolding and re-articulation of meaning across modes and modalities, and from some groups of people to others” (Leppänen et al., 2014, p. 116). At this Olympics, the African American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos (1st and 3rd in the 200 meter sprint) raised their black-gloved fists in the air during the national anthem in the award ceremony. The photo of this moment has since become iconic of the Black Power movement, indexing a specific historical and sociocultural context and message. Here, it is resemiotized from the ‘original’ human rights symbol to human rights in Finland in 2013: the

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MB symbol is drawn and the fist is holding a dumbbell in the air. This logo also appears in all of his fan products, in either white or black. Through this symbol, MB orients to a particular norm center, the Black Power movement, and becomes a physically fit Black Power fighter in the Finnish context, in both society and the hip hop scene, which are predominantly 'White'. His physical superiority, indexed by the dumbbell, can be seen as his 'weapon' in the struggle for human rights in the Finnish context.

After this, the more specific context of the video is shown: a gym (in Helsinki), which is full of mostly 'Black' men (MB included) who are exercising, posing, rapping and even dancing. In contrast with "Prinssille morsian", this video does not tell a chronological story but is a synchronic snap shot of the men in the gym. Some wear sports or hip hop-related do-rags and shirts; MB and Tupac (2pac) Shakur fan t-shirts also appear in the video. Also visible are the Pan-African (or Rastafarian) colors green, red and yellow on, for example, pants with a cannabis sign. Most of these men are muscular, half-dressed and aestheticized. They are often zoomed in on or watched in slow motion, which visually emphasizes their 'Blackness', masculinity and muscularity. Later on in the video, PJ appears to be engaged with (imaginary) intoxicating fragrances and is zoomed in on when the lyrics discuss lions and Africa. Hence, we see here complex polycentric indices: orienting towards American hip hop, (pan-)Africanism and the fitness world.

The camera mostly focuses on the star of the video (see also Vernallis, 2004, p. 47), MB, as he raps the lyrics. He is wearing a white sleeveless shirt with a black MB logo on it. He appears serious, energetic and aggressive, with his eyes sometimes bulging out, and moves around to the rhythm of the song, making both hip hop hand gestures and gym poses with flexed arm muscles (see Figure 13.2). By the third repetition of the chorus, the main 'White'

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man of the video, Aksim, a well-known Finnish rapper, DJ, producer and radio show host, is zoomed in on when he is rapping. He wears a white t-shirt and black boxing gloves, moves to the rhythm of the song amongst the ‘Black’ men and seems to be one of the guys, with the exception of his skin color and less trained muscles.

[enter here: FIGURE 13.2: MB at the gym with his homies]

Towards the end of the video, we see half-clad men improvising dance moves together, while making ‘heeeey’ shouts to the music. By this time, one of the men, perhaps MB, shouts ‘jatkuu’ (‘let’s continue’) to keep the movement and the shouting going. Finally, the camera ends up zooming in on their feet, which continue making dance steps. The *aural resources* of the video consists of the musical elements, MB’s rapping and the chorus, rapped and/or sung mainly by Aksim, but also together with others. The music (produced by Olli Palmroth) can be described as a kind of gangsta funk (g-funk), characterized by a catchy low bass and synthesizer sounds.

MB wrote the lyrics together with Ruudolf, a well-known Finnish rapper. The chorus and the first stanza of the song are shown below.⁶

[enter here: TABLE 13.1: “Salil eka, salil vika” lyrics]

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<p>Still alive, nigga! Kuka sano et' saat tuloksii ilma duunii? Älä usko niin, se on pelkkä satu. Musta Barbaari ei oo neekeri (nekrut ei ikin' kuole) vaan Stadin revityin laku Sä halusit saada hyötyy ilman kipuu – naah, nigga! sun pitää olla salil eka salil vika – still alive, nigga!</p> <p>Yö musta ja nii oon mäki, joka yö kohtaan unessani 2pacin, se sanoo kuuntele mua veli nyt, valkoset ei ota tosissaan, jos sä et oo revitty. Mä heräsin hikisenä, huusin ääne: ”still alive, nigga, pakko saada pumpppi päälle!” Kuolemaan asti valmis rippaa, ne yrittää lähettää Barbaarin takas Afrikkaa, mut en oo menos bäkkii mua ei pidätte häkki, liian vahva, liian bläkki! Sun ei tarvi mua enemppää motivoida, mä oon paha musta mörkö, en oo sun kotipoika. Jos mun täytyy, ni oon valmis salil yöpöy, ei kipuu ei hyötyy, nekru häh? Mä käyn sossus enkä puurra hies, mul' on jo vaikein duuni Suomes, mä oon musta mies.</p>	<p>Still alive, nigga! Who says you get results without work? Don't trust them, it's just a fairytale. Black Barbarian is not a nigger (niggers will never die) but the most ripped licorice of Stadi You wanted to get benefits without pain – naah nigga! you gotta be first at the gym, last at the gym – still alive, nigga!</p> <p>The night is black and so am I, every night I meet 2pac in my dreams, he says listen to me now bro, white people won't take you seriously if you ain't ripped I woke up sweating, shouted out loud: “still alive, nigga, have to get pumped!” Ready to rip until death, they try to send Barbarian back to Africa, but I'm not going back a cage won't hold me, too strong, too black! You don't need to motivate me more, I'm a bad black boogeyman, I'm not your homeboy. If I have to, I'm ready to sleep at the gym, no pain no gain nigga what? I go to the social services and don't work hard, I already have the hardest job in Finland, I'm a black man.</p>
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The *linguistic resources* MB employs in the song, in general, are spoken vernacular Finnish, local Helsinki slang⁷ (e.g., ‘duunii’ (‘work’)), African American Vernacular English (‘still alive, nigga’) and Finnishized English (e.g., ‘bäkkii’ (‘back’), ‘bläkkii’ (‘black’)), modified according to Finnish morphology, orthography and phonology. These resources localize MB as a young Finn, living his life in Helsinki. This mixing of different linguistic resources is typical of Finnish rap music (see e.g., Westinen, 2014), as elsewhere in different local hip hop scenes (see e.g., Pennycook, 2007), and indicates the absence of clear boundaries between ‘local’ and ‘global’ resources, as many of these are used for local purposes and for constructing local identifications (see also Leppänen & Nikula, 2007), and how MB orients towards various norm centers also through language choice.

The chorus (sung by Aksim) explicitly *denies* that MB is a ‘neekeri’ (‘nigger’). Instead, he is characterized as ‘stadin revityin laku’ (‘the most ripped licorice of Stadi’), i.e., the most physically fit. Licorice is a popular candy in Finland, earlier marketed using a golliwog-like logo (see also Kaartinen, 2004). In this sociocultural context, through its physical blackness,

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'laku' (shorthand for 'lakritsi') thus indexes a 'Black' person, supposedly somehow less offensive than 'negro' or 'nigger' (see also Shohat & Stam, 1994, on the exotic 'vegetalization' of the Other). Rastas (2007, p. 119) has argued that Finns often claim the word 'neekeri' to be a neutral, non-derogatory term (see also Kaartinen, 2004). It is actively used in Finland by racists and 'critics of immigration', most often in online discussion forums. Use of the word in this song also raised questions in the (social) media about whether or not the word can be used and who has the right to say it. In the lyrics, MB also characterizes himself as a 'nigga' – a term of closeness, brotherhood and affiliation (e.g., Rahman, 2012; Cutler, 2009) – particularly when deploying (African American Vernacular) English phrases, hence making a collective identification claim. Being a 'nigger' is something he is *disidentified* with but nevertheless the word is mentioned, perhaps to shock and attract attention.

As regards the *discursive resources*, the song constructs, first, several intertwining and overlapping *discourses*. The discourse of (*anti-*)*racism* is most evident in the use of the loaded word 'neekeri'. It is also apparent when it is explicitly denied that MB is one and via references to people wanting to send him "back to Africa". This intertwines with the discourse of *origins, migration and belonging*, exemplified by questions such as where MB is from (he claims to run not on a treadmill but "away from lions" in Africa), where he currently lives (he has the hardest job in Finland) and where he belongs, which actually seems to be somewhere in between Africa and Finland. His job is being a 'Black' man in Finland, which ties into the discourse of *Blackness* (e.g., 'bad black boogeyman') and the 'Black' body (e.g., 'put your black fist into the air if you're a bro'), which is contrasted with *Whiteness* (e.g., 'the White people won't take you seriously unless you're ripped'), by also reversing stereotypical racial roles, i.e., by having a 'White' person in a subordinate role (e.g., 'my driver is White')

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(see also Dyer, 1997; Hall, 1995). The discourse of *sports* (achievements and aesthetics) is visible in how MB stresses hard work and resilience in order to achieve a fit, muscular body, (which he already claims to have), evidenced by the several close ups.

MB also makes several *cultural references*, typical of rap lyrics (e.g., Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2002; Westinen, 2014). For example, he mentions Tupac (2pac) Shakur twice: he gets advice from him about how not to give up and train hard. He also refers to gym cultural practices and various places, such as the capital of Finland ('Stadi' is a local slang name for Helsinki) and Africa. One visual cultural reference is the MB logo, as previously discussed. Another, more national cultural reference is the yellow t-shirt, bearing the logo of a Finnish gossip magazine, *Seiska* ('Seven'; officially: *7 päivää* (7 days)), which gets ripped into shreds during the workout session. In addition to the most obvious meaning (his gym buddy is *that* strong), the ripping of this particular shirt may also index *disidentification* with such 'trash' magazines and their course of action.

The general *mood* of the video (see Shuker, 1994) is energetic, intense, full of gym action, and serious, at times even aggressive (as exemplified by occasional barking noises). The several close-ups and approaches towards the camera further emphasize this. The format of this particular video relates to rap genre conventions in that it emphasizes half-clad, muscular 'Black' male bodies. However, generally rap videos are neither shot in gyms nor do they include specific training sessions. Instead, they are typically set in the street, symbolizing rap's origins in block parties (Vernallis, 2004, p. 77; see also Tervo, 2014). The video contents relate significantly to MB's *star persona* (Shuker, 1994) as he is known to compete in fitness and continuously reports on his training in his social media updates. The visual relates to the aural in that we see the fists in the air, MB's gestures and movements and the

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dance choreography in sync with the music we hear, as if the song is the actual background music played at the gym. We hear about gym life in the lyrics and simultaneously witness events at the gym; when MB raps about himself as ‘a bad black boogeyman’, we see his serious face staring at the camera with his eyes bulging (in stereotypical ‘coon’ fashion) and as the lyrics emphasize ‘Blackness’, we also see ‘Black’ men at the front and (two) ‘White’ men in the background.

Throughout example 1, we have seen how MB’s (dis)identifications are constructed in a complex, polycentric way in the predominantly White Finnish society and Finnish hip hop culture. Through his use of various semiotic resources, he orients to different centers of norms: *African American US hip hop culture* (the cultural references to 2pac), ‘*global Blackness*’ and Black Power (the fist in the air and the discourse of Blackness) and *Africa* (explicit place references and pan-African colors in clothing), perhaps even inexplicitly to Tanzania. He also heavily orients to the current *fitness culture* via, for example, the gym context and his posing. On the other hand, he orients towards *Finnish society*, the state and its current politics and sociocultural debates and discussion via the discourse of racism, the opposition between ‘Black’ and ‘White’ and explicit mention of Finnish social welfare. He also orients towards the *Finnish hip hop scene*, for example by including Aksim, a notable actor in the scene, in the video.

In all of these (dis)identification processes, *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1989) seems to play a crucial role: rather than observing only one specific category, we must take into account several, *intertwining* and *simultaneous* sociocultural identity categories such as gender, race, class and sexual orientation, to fully understand and account for the complexity of (dis)identification processes.⁸ This can be seen in how MB is simultaneously being ‘Black’ in

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relation to and identifying with US hip hop, the Black power movement and civil rights struggles, and being (a) physically fit and powerful (heterosexual) (male), all the while making (ironic) use of stereotypes of 'Black' men as strong, muscular and desirable. Yet, he is also Finnish and in Finland, and he explicitly mentions that he is 'not going back to Africa' and how being 'Black' means that he has the 'hardest job in Finland'. Visually, the video emphasizes MB as 'Black' – but if we also take into account the discursive mode, we get a more comprehensive account of how MB foregrounds his role as the Other in Finnish society, while raising awareness of and critiquing the current sociocultural situation by drawing on specific stereotypes of 'Black' men (in Finland): being fit, wild and masculine but also lazy and out of employment.

4.2 “A BRIDE FOR THE PRINCE”

The music video “Prinssille morsian” was published October 29, 2014 on PJ’s YouTube channel and currently has 549,500 views (as of June 20, 2016). The title is a reference to the US film *Coming to America* (1988; translated into Finnish as “Prinssille morsian”), which features an African prince (from Zamunda, a fictional country) travelling to Queens, New York, to find a self-selected bride, as opposed to the tradition of arranged marriages. The title also links with the artist’s name and indicates that this particular ‘prince’ is looking for a bride.

[enter here: FIGURE 13.3: Title and opening scene]

First, we see the artist name and the name of the song appear on a sunset sky, with mountains in the background, in ‘matching’ yellow-red font (indexing stereotypical ‘African’ colors), soon followed by an image of a flying plane, with accompanying sound. This image leads is

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to conclude that PJ, a(n African) prince, is on his way to Finland. Next, we witness the protagonist (and his crew of four 'Black' men, among them MB, acting as PJ's bodyguard) arriving at the airport and walking on a red carpet, index of royalty and VIP treatment. More precisely, they arrive at a hangar, possibly indicating an arrival on a private plane, not a regular flight.

PJ and his 'homies' are dressed in black suits and white shirts and his bodyguard is also wearing sunglasses and speaking into his microphone. Welcoming them at the airport is a 'White', blonde female flight attendant, dressed in a black jacket and skirt. At first, she is not filmed from the front at all; when she 'speaks' ('Anything to declare?'), she is not moving her lips – she appears to have no voice. She is simply standing, staring and smiling at the arriving prince, who, in the last image of the airport scene, kisses her hand. Later on, we hear her (?) giggling after the "I squatted immediately, that's what we do at the savanna" line by PJ, which indicates that she finds his reactions on seeing 'Finnish lions' (i.e., ice hockey players)⁹ amusing in the Finnish context. With chorus, we move into a mansion context, where the featuring artist Ike sings and dances in the garden, and later on, into a barbershop. The barbershop scene is a clear reference to the original film in which the prince and his servant want to get an 'American' haircut and chat (and argue) about boxing with a group of local, mostly African American men. In the music video, the men, dressed up in sports-related clothing (such as varsity jackets), are also getting their hair cut by 'Black' barbers. This is a strong indication of a norm center: both the film and African American culture (and its barbershop tradition) are oriented towards.

During the first repeat of the chorus, PJ shows the mansion to his 'wife' (the previously introduced flight attendant) for the first time and she appears to love it. They are both dressed

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in (upper) middle-class fashion, in white pullovers and dark pants. They clearly enjoy spending time in their new home, catered for by ‘Black’ male servants (see Figure 13.4). On a few occasions, the servants are filmed as taking a(n unauthorized) break from cleaning or eating food in secret. Both the flight attendant and the (lazy) ‘Black’ male servants (see also Kaartinen, 2004, p. 53) seem to enforce the stereotypical contents of the song: the woman is admired for her blonde beauty and the ‘Black’ men act as subordinates. PJ also dances and enjoys the rhythm of the music with his homies, whether at the airport, barbershop or mansion courtyard. The video ends with PJ escorting his wife in their courtyard and making ‘funny’ dance moves. ‘The End’ then appears on the screen in the previously introduced yellow-red font of the title sequence. This also literally ends the ‘happily ever after’ romantic story of a prince finding his bride, which invokes another norm center, the fairytale tradition.

[enter here: FIGURE 13.4: Prinssi Jusuf, his blonde, ‘White’ wife and the ‘Black’ servant at the mansion]

The *audio* component consists of music, PJ’s raps and Ike’s chorus singing. The music can be characterized as ‘90s rap’ with strong (contemporary) RnB, funk and soul influences. Aksim, present in example 1, has also been involved in the making and writing of this song. The first stanza and the chorus of the song (retrieved July 1, 2016, from <http://lyrics.fi/prinssi-jusuf/prinssille-morsian>) are presented below in Table 13.2.

TABLE 13.2: ‘Prinssille morsian’ lyrics

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<p>tulin Suomeen ilman mun kaverii koska Finnair ei kuljeta kameli lentokentäl maata suutelin ne kysyi passii vastasin: Uff veli kaikki näyttää niin uudelt hei oonko tullu tulevaisuuteen? tuli emäntä kysyy (onko tullattavaa?) no mul on vaa nää suklaahuulet huoneen lämpö nousi naiset vähensi vaatteit ja lämmint ilmaa alko tuulee hei älkää pelätkö prinssi on paikalla ja osaa parantaa viidakkokuumeen sä et kestä tätä heattii emäntä sä et oo ollu Etiopias kesällä mä tulin elefantin selässä silitin poikasii leijonan pesässä</p> <p>uu vaimo vaimo haluun et oot se ainoo vien sut mun kartanoon pistä silmät kii silitä marmorii saat tän kaiken koska oot mun timantti</p>	<p>I came to Finland without my friend because Finnair doesn't transport camels at the airport I kissed the ground they asked for my passport I said: Uff brother everything looks so new hey have I come to the future? a woman came to ask (anything to declare?) well all I got are these chocolate lips the room temperature rose the women started taking off their clothes and warm air started to blow hey don't be afraid the prince is here and knows how to cure a jungle fever you can't handle this heat woman you haven't been in Ethiopia in the summer I came riding an elephant I stroked the cubs in the lion's nest</p> <p>oo wife wife I want you to be the only one I'll take you to my mansion close your eyes stroke the marble you'll get all of this cos you're my diamond</p>
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The *linguistic resources* PJ utilizes in the song are spoken vernacular Finnish and Finnishized English. Mostly, he uses spoken vernacular Finnish, which creates the main body of the text. A few expressions drawn from English, such as 'heattii' ('heat') and 'thug laiffii' ('thug life'), indicate the familiarity, usefulness and relevance of (originally) English features in contemporary Finnish (e.g., Leppänen & Nikula, 2007) and (global) references to hip hop culture, along with an orientation towards various norm centers also through language choice.

The *discursive resources* constructed in the lyrics are various. The discourse of *race* (and of *Blackness and Whiteness*) is constructed via numerous (cultural) references to skin color ('chocolate lips'; 'I blushed blacker') and in the visual juxtaposition of a 'Black' man and a 'White' woman. The discourse of *gender roles / males and females / masculinities and femininities* is also constructed both linguistically, as in: 'you can't handle this heat, woman', and visually, in the way the man kisses the flight attendant on the hand and takes her to the mansion he owns. Further, a discourse of *Africans as primitive, sexually desirable and exotic*

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(as opposed to ‘White’ Finns) is constructed mainly in the lyrics through references to nature (‘that’s what we do on the savanna’) and ‘Black’ men’s traits (‘I can cure a jungle fever’; ‘you can taste the fruit’). Lastly, a discourse of *(im)migration* is constructed both visually and linguistically. However, the visual suggests a rather unconventional story, as (most of) the characters seem to be affluent. This (im)migration discourse is linked with the discourse of Africans, as it is them who are moving to Finland and portrayed as experiencing a wholly new world (‘have I come to the future?’), as opposed to their ‘simple’ life back in Africa. Here, we can clearly see how both Finland and Africa are oriented towards, visually and discursively.

In addition, the lyrics contain explicit *cultural references* to Finnair, the country’s biggest airline, and (again) to Tupac Shakur, the late US rap artist. Place references to Ethiopia, Finland and Helsinki also appear. These references all locate the song within the realm of migration, Finland and hip hop – and exemplify significant norm centers. Furthermore, the varsity jackets in the barbershop scene bear a resemblance to those in the original film – and hence can be seen as a visual cultural reference. The title of the song is clearly an explicit cultural reference to the Finnish name of the film as well as a kind of *homage* to the original (see also Goodwin, 1992, pp. 163–166).

The *mood* in the video (Shuker, 1994) exudes infatuation and romance, in an almost syrupy manner, and, at times, also laid-backness, energy and humor. The format does not completely match the (stereo)typical genres of rap music videos either, with perhaps the exception of luxury properties, and has more to do with romantic stories. PJ’s role in the video matches with his ‘real’ life star persona, as he often (jokingly) talks about and refers to blonde Finnish women (in interviews and social media) and intends to find a wife in Finland. As regards the

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combination of the aural and the visual, the dance moves and other gestures are in sync with the music and often match the lyrics (e.g., the squatting movement). In general, the discursive storyline matches the visual insofar as we see the protagonists in the mansion.

The video shows us (visually, aurally and discursively) various *cultural figures* (Ahmed, 2000; Huttunen, 2004), i.e., social and cultural device through which we can produce distinctions and classifications. These figures often embody and condense a complex of (morally loaded) cultural and gender traits (Huttunen, 2004, p. 139). Here, we encounter the cultural figure of a (hetero)sexually desirable 'Black' man. This is underlined by the concept of 'jungle fever', a slang term for the sexual desire of 'White' (women) for 'Black' (men). Another stereotypical thing which may differentiate 'Black' men from Finnish ones, or 'White' men in general, is that in the videos the former frequently dance; Finnish men are stereotypically known/shown *not* to dance (see Kärjä, 2008). Another cultural figure we can see constructed here is the 'White', blond female object, who does not have a voice (of her own), but is an accessory, who, according to the lyrics, needs to conform to 'African' beauty norms (i.e., gain weight) and give the man (beautiful) children. She does not, however, need to wear a burka¹⁰ which suggests that the man may not be a (orthodox, practicing) Muslim, a 'complete' Other (in the Finnish context), but rather one orienting to Finnish societal (majority) norms.

Example 2 again testifies to the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and the overlapping and intertwining of identity categories: PJ is 'Black', 'African', 'Finnish', male, heterosexual and represents the (upper) middle class (but also performs the role of a prince). PJ's polycentric (dis)identifications are constructed in a complex way in the predominantly White Finnish society, through multisemiotic resources. An orientation towards *Africa and*

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the roots / background shows in PJ's self-characterizations (I as a 'Black' man), relations with other people (e.g., the woman), descriptions of living conditions (the heat, the savanna) and (stereo)typical traditions and customs (owning goats and camels, having ten wives). An orientation towards *Finnish society* shows, for instance, in the preference for stereotypical, blond women, Finnair's ban on transporting camels and PJ's insistence on Finnish as their home language. *American rap and hip hop* are a norm center in that hip hop gear is worn (showing affiliation and identification with a certain lifestyle), a 'mandatory' or even clichéd Tupac Shakur reference is made and PJ suggests they raise their children to lead a 'thug life' i.e., underprivileged, poor life, stereotypically led in ghettos. *Popular culture*, in general, or the *Coming to America* film, in particular, is a further possible norm center. This is suggested by the song's title, the airplane scene and the font used in the opening and the barbershop scene. Moreover, the discursive storyline of a prince searching for a bride is homage to the original. PJ (and his posse) are represented as belonging to and identifying with both Africa and Finland and they make numerous references to both. Their (dis)identifications are also constructed in the relationship between us and them, perhaps between 'native' Finns and 'Afro' or 'new' Finns, but also between Finnish women and themselves, African men. In doing this, PJ deliberately and ironically utilizes stereotypical, racialized and gendered, cultural figures, i.e., Otherness, to raise awareness of people's categorization in Finnish society.

5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Drawing on insights from the sociolinguistics of globalization, the semiotic approach to the study of multimodality and music video studies, this chapter explored the multisemiotic construction of Otherness in two music videos by Finnish rap artists of immigrant background.

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Both MB and PJ engage in complex and multifaceted (dis)identification work in their videos. The image we get is not unified but instead draws on *several* stereotypes and cultural figures, often ironically. ‘Black’ people, in general, and African men, in particular, are multisemiotically constructed as fit, muscular, aggressive, threatening, hard-working (at the gym but not in working life) and as rich, upper middle class, servants and laborers, sexually attractive, close to nature, ingenuous, having a sense of rhythm and as skillful dancers – all traits that contribute to Otherness. In line with my Facebook findings, another social media context where MB and PJ are active (see Westinen, in press), in their music videos they also seem to negotiate their (dis)identifications, often ‘in-between-cultures’, in a ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994). Their (dis)identification work – affiliation, belonging, communality vs differentiation and exclusion (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 14–21) – is multifaceted and needs to be understood in specific societal and cultural contexts. In addition to hip hop, they seem to identify with and belong to both Africa and Finland, their identification processes drawing on, yet also blurring, the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Thus, in present-day Finland, they seem to be making visible (and heard!) the significant questions of who can belong where, and on what grounds.

A crucial aspect of their multisemiotic communication is humor. Drawing on Hall’s (1995, p. 22) ideas of black characterizations in the media, ‘clown’ or ‘entertainer’ characterizes both MB’s and PJ’s actions, implying a ‘Black’ man’s ‘innate’ humor. Here, however, the purpose is (also) ironic. The use of humor, especially irony, is a common device of the ‘victims’ of (ethnic) stereotyping, who adopt and adapt these stereotypes to create, via humor, positive self-identification and, ultimately, social change (e.g., Boskin & Dorinson, 1985). As Bradley (1996, p. 121) has argued, “[a] stigmatized identity may be appropriated and subverted as a

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basis for resistance to dominant meanings, and for positive identification as in the case of Black Power and similar movements: ‘Say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud!’”.

The analysis clearly reveals how MB and PJ utilize stereotypes attached to ‘Black’ people and African men; thus, by self-selecting and -defining these stereotypes, they gain social power (see also Kärjä, 2007). Their social media representations also seem political, in that they define and construct power relations between groups of people. Thus, to use a particular stereotype is a political choice and these artists’ choice of politically ‘threatening’ representations (because of their directness, hostility and delicate nature) can be considered purposeful and strategic (see also Kärjä, 2007, p. 205). Instead of the secure(d) and safe Otherness suggested by Kärjä, these particular rap videos confront us with an ‘*in your face*’ type of Otherness, which both makes use of the safe and secure(d) Otherness (exemplified by the well-known references to the US film in PJ’s song and video) and its stereotypes but also, significantly, ironizes them in a very straightforward and provocative way. Otherness is brought center stage by the Other.

These rap artists can also be seen as providing ‘new’ perspectives on Finnishness (see also Oikarinen-Jabai, 2013; Rastas & Päivärinta, 2010): via multisemiotic resources, they represent themselves as fully belonging neither to Finland nor to their own or their parents’ origins – and thus they need to negotiate their (dis)identifications in a ‘new’ way. Their social media communication, in general, can be read as a critical voice: they raise awareness on such issues as (im)migration, integration and racism (see also Westinen, in press). The concept of superdiversity helps to characterize such sociocultural contexts (including the digital one) along with people’s (diverse) trajectories, mobilities, resources and networking – how (dis)identifications (e.g., ‘migrant’, ‘origins’, ‘nationality’, ‘ethnicity’) should not be

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assumed but explored (see Arnaut et al., 2016, pp. 1–17). As Arnaut (2012) has suggested, understanding superdiversity as *a perspective* and a lens through which to see things, enables us to conceive diversity as a social practice and discourse, i.e., “a widely spread, globally recognizable and legitimate discursive space in which people from very unequal positions imagine, formulate, and work on their individual and collective identities” (p. 7). This view always demands ethnographic openness (Arnaut, 2012; Arnaut et al., 2016), a research agenda I fully embrace, in *both* digital and physical contexts, in continuing to explore the complex construction of (dis)identification in emergent Finnish migrant hip hop.

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¹ The focus here is on the (dis)identification work of the *artists* done in and through the videos. Although examination of the *uptake* of these (dis)identifications by audiences would also be highly topical, it is unfortunately not within the scope of this chapter.

² Immigration in smaller numbers occurred during the periods of Swedish (until 1809) and Russian rule (from 1809 until 1917), when many Swedish, Russian, Jewish and Tatar officials, traders and soldiers moved to Finland, along with smaller numbers of English, French, German and Nordic people (e.g., Häkkinen & Tervonen, 2005).

³ 'Talking back' refers to how people positioned in the margins challenge the surrounding discourses and majority ways of categorizing and defining them. They turn from objects into subjects in their own right – and gain a 'liberated voice' (hooks, 1989, p. 9; in Finland, see e.g., Rastas & Päivärinta, 2010).

⁴ Permission from the artists has been obtained for both the video and lyrics material.

⁵ Note that my translation is not a literal one (e.g., The *saga* of...), but rather a pragmatic, cultural-contextual one.

⁶ Retrieved from Musta Barbaari and Takamaa (2014).

⁷ Many Helsinki slang items, such as this one, have also spread outside the Helsinki metropolitan area.

⁸ See also Berggren (2013) for an intersectional analysis on Swedish male rap artists.

⁹ Finland's national (male) ice hockey team is nicknamed 'The Lions' ('leijonat'), indexing the Finnish coat of arms, depicting a lion, which, in a modified form, also features on their jerseys.

¹⁰ Roughly one-third of Ethiopians are Muslims (CIA, 2016); some of the Muslim women wear a burka.