

# Hate speech targeting Sami people with disabilities

## Introduction

In essence, research on hate speech has focused on single groups (Nadim, Fladmoe, & Wessel-Aas, 2016). However, according to research on harassment, it sometimes occurs as interactions between group affiliations, thereby exposing some people to added risk (Buchanan, Fitzgerald, & Tetrick, 2008). Consequently, studies of hate speech should also examine the interactions between various group affiliations (Nadim et al., 2016). In this chapter, we elaborate on the phenomenon of hate speech targeting individuals with a double minority-group affiliation, Sami people with disabilities, from an intersectional perspective.

The Sami are the indigenous people of Sapmi, a territory including northern parts of Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia. The majority live in Norway, where the Sami population is estimated to be 40,000 (Dagsvold, Møllersen, & Stordahl, 2016). Over the last decade, we have seen an increased focus on discrimination targeting Sami (Bals, Turi, Skre, & Kvernmo, 2010; Hansen, 2008) and disabled people (Tøssebro, 2016; Vedeler, 2013) in Norway. However, research focusing hate speech targeting either the Sami (Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015) or people with disabilities (Olsen, Vedeler, Eriksen, & Elvegård, 2016) is scarce, and no research has addressed hate speech targeting Sami people with disabilities. According to our studies focusing on the situation of Sami people with disabilities, this group experiences bullying and hate speech because of both their Sami background and their disability (Gjertsen, Melbøe, Fedreheim, & Fylling, 2017; Melbøe, Johnsen, Fedreheim, & Hansen, 2016). There are several categories of hate speech, and these are interrelated. The chapter elucidates how Sami people with disabilities experience hate speech in different ways as members of an indigenous group and as persons with disabilities.

In accordance with our participants' descriptions of how they have experienced hate speech related to *both* being Sami and having a disability, one might conclude that belonging to more than one marginalized group can cause a "double handicap" (Brooks & Deegan, 1981) or "double discrimination" (Habib, 1995). However, this "additive" way of thinking does not adequately explain the phenomenon of hate speech experienced by the participants in our studies. Instead, as designated by Fekjær (2010), the combination of different statuses sometimes seems to carry greater significance than their sum. Thus, membership in two stigmatized groups does not necessarily cause increased harassment only but also makes the harassment take on different qualities (Buchanan et al., 2008). In this chapter we through an intersectional perspective attempts to capture the meaning of belonging to different groups at the same time and how this can affect experiences with hate speech in various ways, based on the situation (Grönvik & Söder, 2008).

## **The Sami**

Historically, the Sami engaged in reindeer herding, farming and fishing (Lund, Brustad, & Høgmo, 2008). However, today the majority has adopted a more Western lifestyle characterized by modern professions, trades and dietary habits (Sjolander, 2011). Moreover, an increasing share of Sami people have relocated from core Sami areas and now live in urban areas (Selle, Semb, Strømsnes, & Nordø, 2015). From the mid-nineteenth century until World War II, the Sami were subjected to a strong assimilation policy whereby Norwegian authorities made vigorous efforts to acculturate them into Norwegian society. For example, the use of the Sami language was banned in Norwegian schools, and many Sami children were sent to boarding schools to remove them from their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and to facilitate their assimilation. Parallel to the authorities' Norwegianization policy, the Sami personally experienced stigmatization, discrimination, and everyday racism (Minde, 2003). In recent decades, there has been a Sami ethnic and cultural revival (K. L. Hansen, Melhus, & Lund, 2010) with increased use of the Sami language and customs and the establishment of Sami institutions such as a Sami parliament, college, and research centers (Turi, Bals, Skre, & Kvernmo, 2009) and the passage of the Sami Act (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 1987). The Norwegian government has officially declared and ratified the Sami as indigenous people of Norway (ILO Convention no. 169, 1990). Hence, Sami people, according to the Convention, have the right to exercise control over their way of life and to maintain and develop their identity, language and religion within the framework of the Norwegian state. Today, Sami people, in general, are treated as equals in Norwegian society (Pedersen & Høgmo, 2012), but they still experience more bullying and ethnic discrimination than the majority Norwegian population (Hansen, Melhus, Høgmo, & Lund, 2008).

## **Norwegian welfare policy**

Compared to many other countries, Norway has a rather comprehensive welfare policy. The aim of the social security system in Norway is to ensure an acceptable standard of living for everyone. This is done, for example, through a universal minimum pension, while the health policy intends to remove differences in health conditions and mortality between different social groups (Stamsø, 2009). The welfare provision has a universal nature, which means that all citizens are equally entitled to a decent standard of living and full citizenship rights (Saunes, Hansen, Tomic, & Lindahl, 2017). According to the Health and Care Services Act (Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2011), all Norwegian citizen inhabitants have a legal right to home healthcare services, regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, or other differences. However, some benefits are means-tested or selective, for example, disability benefits. The public sector has the main responsibility for welfare production (Loga, 2018). The Ministry of Health and Care services is organised, managed, and financed primarily by Norwegian municipalities. Political documents and legislation underline that people with disabilities are entitled to enjoy the same living conditions and quality of life as the rest of Norway's population.

Based on international rankings, Norway in general performs very well in many measures of well-being, and Norwegians are, in general, more satisfied with their lives than the average, relative to most other countries (see for example OECD, 2017). Furthermore, the health status in Norway is good with a high life expectancy and sound health compared with the average in OECD countries (Saunes et al., 2017). However, research on living conditions of people with disabilities has revealed that this group experiences poorer living conditions compared to the Norwegian population in general in regard to housing, education, employment, income, health, social relations and self-determination (Gjertsen et al., 2017; Söderström & Tøssebro, 2011; Kittelsaa et al., 2015). Since people with disabilities are a heterogeneous group, living conditions will vary; however, people with intellectual disabilities are one of the groups found to have the poorest living conditions in several areas.

Regarding discrimination and the ability to participate, Norway ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2013. The rights of Norwegians with disabilities are also protected through several national laws and policies, the main one being the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act prohibiting discrimination. This law functions to promote equality and equity, to ensure all citizens the same opportunities and rights to societal participation, to increase accessibility, and to ensure that social and physical environments are accessible (Ministry of Children and Equality 2017). Nevertheless, people with disabilities experience discrimination related to work, housing, education and other aspects of their lives more often than non-disabled people.

## **The data**

This chapter relies on data from two studies performed by the Institute of Social Education (ISE) at UiT, the Arctic University of Norway. One is a qualitative study of the life situation of Sami people with disabilities (Melbøe et al., 2016), and the other is a quantitative survey of living conditions among people with intellectual disabilities in Sami areas (Gjertsen et al., 2017). The first was commissioned by the Nordic Welfare Centre (NVC) and the second by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs (Bufdir) and the NVC. Both studies were conducted in accordance with the National Ethical Committee for the Social Sciences and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service. However, when we were invited to participate in this book about hate speech, we performed a new analysis on the data from the two studies, this time examining them to illuminate the phenomenon of hate speech targeting Sami people with disabilities.

The qualitative study focused on the life situation of Sami people with disabilities and was conducted from 2014–2015. The study included 31 semi-structured interviews with people with disabilities and a Sami background and/or their next of kin or caregivers. The selection included children, youths, adults and elderly people (7–88 years old). The study focused on the situations of 10 females and 21 males with a variety of impairments, including sensory (e.g. sight and/or

hearing), physical (e.g. paralysis), or cognitive (e.g. learning disability) challenges. Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect their privacy and for confidentiality.

In 2017, the ISE conducted a study of living conditions among persons with intellectual disabilities in Sami areas in Norway. A total of 93 persons, 16 years and older, responded to the survey; 57% were men and 43% women. Most of the participants had a mild or moderate intellectual disability, and a few had a severe or profound intellectual disability. A third of the sample had a Sami background. We examined whether there are differences in the living conditions of persons with intellectual disabilities with and without a Sami background, and we compared their living conditions to those of people with intellectual disabilities in Norway, in general, as well as with the living conditions of the Norwegian population in general. In addition to different dimensions of living conditions and quality of life, the study focused on bullying. This was the first living-conditions survey in Norway for which persons with intellectual disabilities could answer the questionnaire themselves and the first living-conditions survey among this group to focus on the meaning of having a Sami background. The questionnaire included mainly fixed-response categories but also had several open-ended questions.

## **How we define “hate speech”**

This book chapter applies an understanding of the concept of hate speech that aligns with that of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud’s Report (2015 p. 5). Here, hate speech is understood as: “...degrading, threatening, harassing or stigmatising speech, which affects an individual’s or group’s dignity, reputation and status in society by means of linguistic and visual effects that promote negative feelings, attitudes and perceptions based on characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, etc.” However, neither of the two studies this chapter is based on has explicitly used the term hate speech. Although hate speech has been a punishable offense since 1970, the hate speech term is seldom used in Norway. As emphasized by Olsen et al. (2016 and in this volume), “hate” is perceived as a very strong word in Norway and implies something severely negative, and thus even informants who have experienced serious harassment hesitate to use this term.

When we base this chapter on findings from our studies revealing bullying and discrimination of Sami people with disabilities, it is because we argue that bullying, discrimination and hate speech are related. This sort of overlap between hate speech, bullying and discrimination research is described, for example, by Eggebø and Stubberud (2016). Both hate speech and bullying include offensive actions in an asymmetrical relationship, and both might cause uncertainty, fear, and anxiety for those targeted (Nilsen, 2014). Nonetheless, much of the research on bullying does not necessarily question the actual content of the offensive speech, which makes it impossible to determine whether the offense is discriminatory or not, a premise for classifying the bullying as hate speech (Eggebø & Stubberud, 2016). However, in our qualitative study, especially, we have

data that clearly reveal that the content of bullying has discriminatory characteristics. For example some are told that they are “being stupid as a Sami”, while others are tormented for their physical appearance such as having a harelip or other characteristics caused by their impairment/ diagnoses.

Even if we assert that some of the bullying demonstrates hate speech, in this chapter we use the terms bullying and harassment as well as hate speech. The main reason for this is that bullying was the main concept applied in our studies, and thus, for both methodological and ethical reasons, we will continue to refer to it as such. Moreover, as pointed out by Olsen et al. (2016), there is no clear demarcation between what constitutes hate speech and what is “just” an unpleasant experience. By using the concepts of bullying and harassment in addition, we hope to present a more complete picture of the experiences of Sami people with disabilities with offensive actions than if talking strictly about hate speech. Experiences of violence are not included in our definition of hate speech in this chapter, although such experiences are part of the picture drawn by the participants in both studies. By using an intersectional perspective, we intend to capture the complexity of the concept of hate speech.

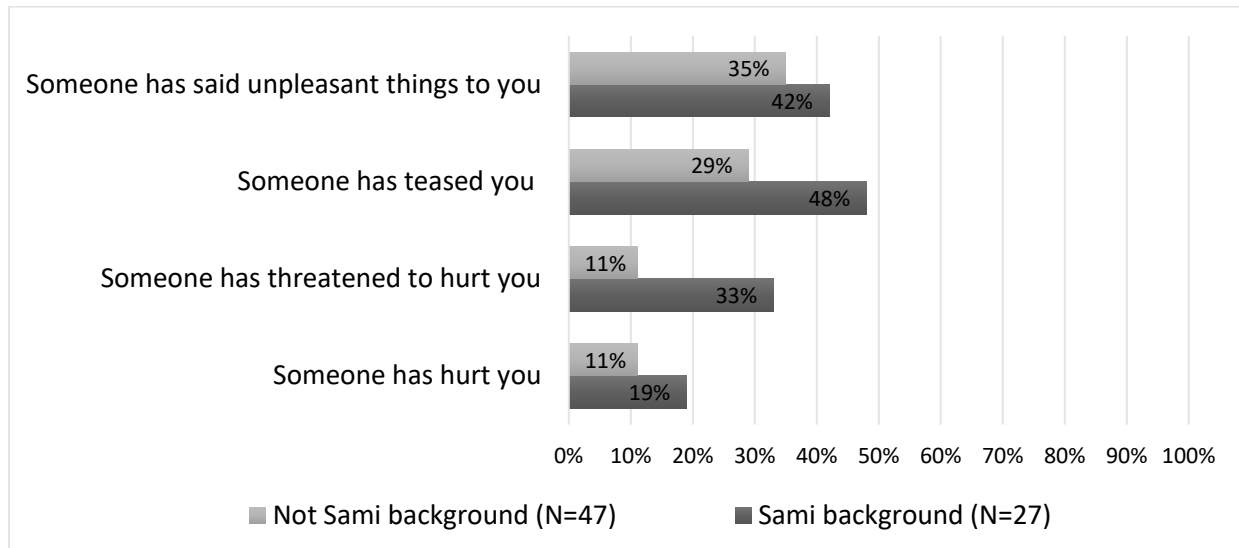
In the living conditions survey, we operationalize “bullying” by asking the respondents if, during the previous year, they have experienced someone saying hurtful, negative remarks to them or threatening to hurt them (Gjertsen et al., 2017). Since the questionnaire had to be easy for the respondents with intellectual disabilities to understand, there were only “yes” and “no” choices to respond to the questions. The informants could, however, elaborate on their answers using their own words when we asked open questions.

In the qualitative study of the life situations of Sami people with disabilities, the participants freely described their experiences of bullying and discrimination. Common to the stories told by our informants was their experience of something unpleasant inflicted by others, such as threatening, harassing or stigmatizing speech.

## **The extent of hate speech**

The findings from our quantitative study reveal that persons with intellectual disabilities are victims of bullying and violence more often than the general population. Furthermore, women are more vulnerable than men, and those with a Sami background are at even greater risk of being victims of bullying and violence than those without a Sami background. More than one-third of the respondents in the survey (37%) have experienced others making unpleasant remarks to them, and almost half (47%) have experienced being teased. In the survey, 17% report that someone has threatened to harm them, and 14% report that they have been harmed by others. A considerably higher proportion of persons with a Sami background have experienced the different types of bullying described compared to those without a Sami background. Figure One below shows that while 42% of those with a Sami background have experienced hate speech, the percentage of those without a Sami background reporting the same experience was 35%.

**Figure One: During the last year, have you experienced something like what we have described?**



*Percentage that answered “yes”, by ethnicity (Sami background or not). N=47 (Sami background) and N=27 (no Sami background).*

About one-third (33%) of the respondents with a Sami background reported that lately they have been afraid of being beaten or bullied when traveling alone near their homes.<sup>1</sup> Only 17% of those without a Sami background reported the same experience.

In our qualitative study of Sami people with different types of impairments, about half of the informants talked about bullying and harassment, even if we did not ask specific questions about these. This supports the findings from the living-conditions study that indicate that experiences with hate speech among Sami people with disabilities are commonplace.

### **Hate speech motivated by ethnicity and disability**

We will now present examples of experiences with degrading, threatening, harassing and stigmatizing speech suffered by Sami persons with disabilities, and we will particularly consider the characteristics this kind of speech is based on.

Several of the participants in our qualitative study described experiences of harassment and bullying due to their impairment. One of these is Laila, an adult woman with an intellectual disability. She questions how people at different places meet her: *“They say I am handicapped ... Are they allowed to say that?”* Klaus, an adult man with a physical impairment, describes how

<sup>1</sup> This includes those answering “yes, very” and “yes, a little” to this question.

peers violated him at school by calling him *a cripple*, etc. An adult woman with a hearing impairment, Berit, was bullied in school because she did not master speech as well as others. Her peers called her *dumb* and accused her of not understanding anything at all. Moreover, Berit described how others later tormented her for getting a hearing aid, how she tried to hide it so that others could not see it, and, in the end, how wrecked the hearing aid herself by stepping on it because she was so tired of being bullied.

Per, an adult man with a hearing impairment, referred to his experiences of harassment due to his impairment even from the staff at school. He described how he was treated:

*“I was presented almost like intellectual disabled when I started school ... My father was furious and my mother very disappointed. When I had finished my Master degree, she visited the headmaster and confronted him”.*

Several of the participants in our qualitative study reported bullying and harassment because of their Sami background. Being accused of *“being stupid as a Sami”* is an insult experienced by several. One of those who was repeatedly submitted to this kind of comment at school was Knut, a young boy with ADHD. His mother described how he is easily provoked due to his diagnosis, which his peers found very amusing and thus bullied him. In this way, Knut ended up being bullied because of both his ethnicity and his disability. One of the other participants who described experiencing harassment and bullying motivated by her Sami background was Rakel, a young woman with a psychiatric impairment. She referred to how:

*“It was not very easy to come from a very little Sami school at the age of twelve. The environment was pretty much harder than I was used to /.../ not physical /.../ but I was called Sami bastard and that sort of thing. And when we should draw each other, I was drawn as a reindeer and that sort of thing...”*

Paradoxically, while Rakel’s peers in a mainstream Norwegian school bullied her for being Sami, she had actually transferred from the Sami school she had attended earlier because her peers there bullied her for not being Sami “enough”. According to Rakel: *“That was partly the reason we moved. Because there (at the old school) the bullying focused on we did not keep reindeer”*. However, Rakel is not the only one who described harassment from other Sami children due to not being Sami “enough”.

Per, who was mentioned previously, did not have a chance to learn Sami in school, even though he came from a Sami-speaking family. This was because the teachers did not think he would be able to learn both Norwegian and Sami. Per described how, when he tried to talk to other Sami people in public, he was sometimes threatened with a beating or told to *“get the hell out of here”* when they realized that he did not speak the Sami language. Nicolai, an adult with a physical impairment, reported being bullied by other Sami because of his Sami background. He was bullied primarily about his Sami characteristics such as high cheekbones. According to Nicolai, the Sami who bullied him, even if they came from Sami families, often did not define themselves as Sami.

Nicolai stated that he thinks their behavior is related to their own earlier experiences of being victims of bullying.

Per, Rakel and Nicolai's experiences of bullying and harassment focusing on their Sami background by other Sami are not unique. Høgmo (1989, 2005) claimed that the strongest Sami discrimination takes place within combined Norwegianized Sami and Norwegian local communities, and that it is often persons with a Sami background themselves who inflict the most humiliating discrimination. Høgmo (2005) argued that such discrimination is not caused by hate targeting the Sami but rather is a reaction to attitudes in the majority community. Thus, disparaging speech about Sami reduces the focus on the perpetrators' own ethnic background (Høgmo, 2005: 19–20). However, while this explanation aligns with Nicolai's experience, it does not explain why other Sami pupils harassed Rakel for not having reindeer, etc.

The reason for the Sami pupils' harassment of Rakel might actually be quite the opposite. In the Sami revitalization process following the long assimilation period, the Sami elite have focused on distinguishing between the Sami and the Norwegian, holding onto the idea of the Sami as "a traditional and genuine common culture" (Gaski, 2008, p. 234). Consequently, Rakel and others who do not necessarily have these traditional visible cultural traits, such as speaking the Sami language, keeping reindeer, etc., might experience not being perceived as "real" Sami or "Sami enough". To Sami with disabilities, this is problematic, as they, like Rakel, risk exclusion from both the Norwegian majority and the Sami minority, not being fully accepted by either and thus not really belonging anywhere.

Marit, an elderly woman with an intellectual disability, describes another example of harassment because of her Sami background. She refers not only to how, as a pupil decades ago, she was forbidden to wear Sami clothing at the boarding school but also how even her mother had been met with anger from the staff when she visited Marit at school wearing traditional Sami clothing, known as the *gákti*. Wearing the *gákti* today can still be a cause for harassment and even hate speech, as this visible cultural trait makes it possible for others to identify who is a Sami. Klaus, an adult man with a physical impairment, describes experiencing hate speech recently when he was traveling to Oslo, the capital of Norway, and wore the *gákti*. He describes how, suddenly, an adult on the other side of the street shouted: "*Get lost and go back up north where you belong. You have nothing to do here at the south!*". Briefly summarized, Sami people with disabilities seem to experience bullying and harassment sometimes because of their Sami background, sometimes due to their disability, and at times as a combination of both.

As pointed out by Soorenian in this volume, for many victims, hate speech occurs so often that it is regarded as something that just happens to them. We find this kind of normalization and denial present in the qualitative study among Sami people with disabilities. While bullying at school, according to some participants, was taken seriously, others experienced that bullying was ignored and silently accepted. The normalization of hate speech targeting both disabled and Sami people may both reinforce the overlaps and intersectionality of hate speech and make it more difficult to recognize. Furthermore, as Burch (2018) pointed out, people employ different practices of



resistance to challenge hate speech. Most of those who related stories about bullying at school seemed to perceive it as something they had to expect and that nothing could be done about it. Several of the informants did not express anger because of what someone had done or said to them or because no one tried to stop the bullying. Burch (2018) discussed how hate speech harms its victims in complex ways through the internalization of hateful attitudes. This may be the case among our informants as well.

### **Where does hate speech take place and who are the perpetrators?**

Hate speech targeting Sami people with disabilities happens at different places. In our studies, the most frequently reported location for these experiences is *school* and especially primary school. The participants have attended different kinds of schools, such as Sami schools and boarding schools (especially the elderly participants), mainstream, and special schools. They reported experiences of being bullied in all these settings and across different periods of time, that is, from the 1950s when our eldest participants went to school until today. The experience of bullying and harassment at school was especially difficult for those attending boarding schools, as they had to stay at school all week long. Thus, they were exposed to bullying and harassment both during the day and in their free time.

Moreover, Kai, another adult man with a cognitive impairment, reported harassment even from the staff at the boarding school. He described how the staff at his school, for example, regularly initiated and organized snowball fights between the Sami boarding pupils and the Norwegian-speaking pupils who lived nearby at home. During these fights, staff deliberately joined the Norwegian-speaking team in a match against Sami pupils, who were in the minority. Kai referred to how he and his best friend ended up practicing martial arts in their leisure time in order to be able to defend themselves.

Other participants described how staff at boarding schools, although not necessarily participating in bullying, offered very little support. Olaus, an elderly man with a physical impairment, reported that pupils could not expect any support from staff when it came to bullying: *“The house wife was really harsh ... It was no use to complain to her ... Once I was told that if I did not stop complaining I would be spanked”*. Moreover, Kai described how, according to traditional Sami upbringing, children were expected to solve their own problems, which meant that it was no use complaining at home about harassment and bullying that took place at school. Even though there is now only one Sami boarding school remaining in Norway, our young participants talked about extensive bullying and harassment even today in mainstream schools. This is serious as Sami pupils with impairments have to attend school every day since education is compulsory for 10 years in Norway.

Some of the participants also reported being targeted by harassment and bullying out in *society* in general. One of these was Ragnar, an elderly man with a psychiatric impairment. He talked about such experiences: *“Especially earlier, not as much the last twenty years, in our village. There has*

*been extensive bullying from the Norwegians targeting us Sami ... Even today there is still a lot of hidden racism*". Unfortunately, Ragnar's experience is not unique. Sami people, especially adults and the oldest, are to a certain degree used to being discriminated against and stigmatized because of their Sami background. Sami people living in mixed communities with mainly Norwegian inhabitants are more exposed to such attacks than those living in mainly Sami communities (Hansen, 2011). This means that there seem to be geographic variations in the occurrence of hate speech, bullying and harassment targeting people of Sami background. The likelihood of experiencing hate speech because of having a Sami background is much higher in areas with a dense Sami population than in core Sami populated areas, as the assimilation policy did not weaken Sami culture as much in these areas as in other parts of Norway.

Furthermore, in our study of living conditions among people with intellectual disabilities, several of the adults told stories about bullying, harassment and threats at *sheltered workshops* or at *group homes*<sup>2</sup>. In the survey, a higher percentage of respondents living in group homes reported being afraid or worried (30%) compared to those not living in group homes (21%). This may be related to the fact that many people living in group homes are insecure when it comes to other residents (Skog Hansen & Grødem, 2012). Some of the respondents told us that they were afraid of or had experienced harassment or being beaten by co-tenants in the group home where they live. One of the informants with an intellectual disability talked about not feeling safe at home:

*"There is just one person in the group home who is bad. I have talked about it. I am afraid that he will beat me or say something."*

According to our studies, Sami people with impairments also experience harassment within the welfare system, for instance from nurses, doctors, etc. Berit, a woman with a hearing impairment who was mentioned earlier in the chapter, described a visit to her home by the local health nurse (who was also Sami) after Berit had her first baby. The nurse spoke to Berit in Sami, a language Berit had not had an opportunity to learn as she was forced to learn Norwegian in school. Berit described the visit:

*"I asked her (the local health nurse) to speak Norwegian as I couldn't speak Sami. She became very angry and said, 'You come from a Sami village and can't speak Sami!'"*

Our studies show that Sami people with disabilities experience hate speech at places where they expect to feel safe. Olsen et al. (2016) found a similar situation in their study of hate speech directed toward disabled people in Norway. However, Sami people experience this even more often. This draws a sad picture of everyday life for many Sami people with disabilities.

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<sup>2</sup> Many people with intellectual disabilities live in group homes with other people in need of help. These may be people with different kinds of and degrees of intellectual disabilities but can also be people with mental illnesses (Kittelsaa & Tøssebro, 2011). They have their own rooms or apartments. Nevertheless, they often have to share some spaces with other residents, for example, the kitchen and living room. Services are often organized and provided in connection with these group homes.

As Sherry (2010) pointed out, it is often assumed that hate crimes (including hate speech) are senseless, irrational, and random “stranger crimes”. However, he emphasized that, according to research, very often the perpetrators of disability hate crimes are “people directly in their lives”, referring to the victims. This is also the case in our studies, where the participants reported that very often, it is people they know who bully or harass them. Among those mentioned are classmates, co-tenants where they live, and people at work or professionals within welfare services. Several specifically pointed out that their ‘friends’ are actually the ones bullying or harassing them. It is particularly important to be aware of this when it comes to persons with intellectual disabilities, as they are especially at risk for the phenomenon of “mate crime” (Roderick, 2014). Mate crime implies that someone “makes friends” with a person and then abuses or exploits the relationship. Many persons with intellectual disabilities find it challenging to establish friendships, which makes them more likely to accept any “friendship” offered, even though it may turn out to be dysfunctional or even abusive. Moreover, because of their impairments, some people with intellectual disabilities might also have problems reporting that someone is exploiting their friendship, harassing them, etc. Thus, it is important to be aware and to pay special attention to hate speech targeting this group.

In short, Sami people with disabilities seem to experience hate speech at all kinds of places, including in public such as in the street, and at what have been perceived as relatively safe or protected locations such as at school, at work, or where one lives. Furthermore, hate speech is used by both individuals from the Norwegian majority and individuals from the Sami minority, by strangers and by people the victims know, and by people with and without disabilities themselves.

## **The consequences of hate speech**

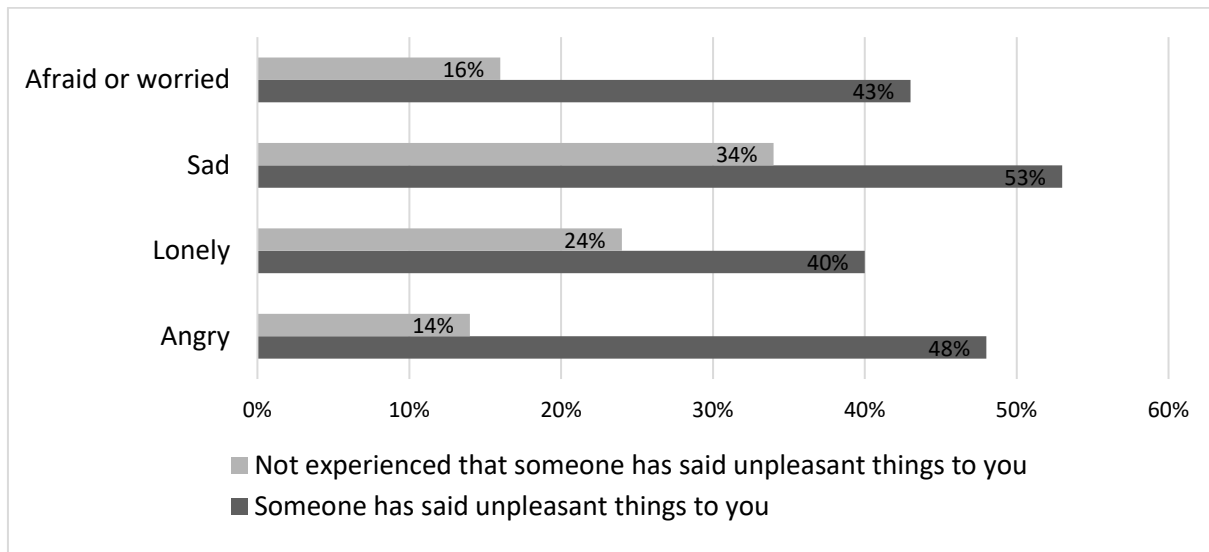
Experience of hate speech have serious and various consequences for Sami people with disabilities. In the living conditions survey, we find a correlation between bullying and poor mental health. The term “mental health” was operationalized by four questions about mental health issues. We asked the respondents if they often struggle with sadness/loneliness/anger/feeling afraid. The response choices were “yes” or “no”.

We found that people with intellectual disabilities both with and without Sami background have poorer mental health compared to the population in general. Previous studies have found the same (Söderström & Tøssebro 2011; Hove 2009). Both Hove (2009) and Olsen et al. (2016) stressed that people with intellectual disabilities who are exposed to bullying have a higher risk for developing depression and feelings of sadness.

Further, we found that people with intellectual disabilities and a Sami background have poorer mental health than those without a Sami background. We examined different variables in the statistical analysis and found that among others bullying corresponded to poor mental health. The respondents, both with and without Sami background, who had been bullied report poorer mental health than those not experienced bullying. Figure Two below illustrates how 43% of those

reporting that someone has said unpleasant things to them, are usually afraid or worried. Only 16% of those not having experienced this report similarly. A higher proportion of those who report that someone has said unpleasant things to him or her, also more often feel angry, lonely, and sad than those who had not been bullied. As shown in Figure Two the respondents with Sami background are more exposed to unpleasant comments than those without. This corresponds to the findings of Hansen and Sørli (2012), who revealed that Sami people are at higher risk for poor mental health than others because of the bullying they endure.

**Figure Two: Do you usually struggle with feeling afraid or worried/sad/angry?**



*Part answering “yes” according to whether during the last year the respondents experienced someone saying unpleasant things to them, by percent. N=78–80*

In our qualitative study, participants also reported that bullying caused mental stress. For example, Barbro, a young Sami woman, described how, after years of extensive verbal and physical bullying at school, she was admitted to a psychiatric ward as a teenager. The mother of Knut, a young Sami boy with an ADHD diagnosis, described how years of extensive harassment and bullying because of he being Sami resulted in them taking him out of school for months, involving him in traditional reindeer-herding activities instead. According to his mother, her son had considered taking his own life, but after months of taking part in reindeer herding instead of being at school, he became a happy boy again. In the end, Knut actually chose to move to be with his family in another town in order to continue his education.

Hate speech also affects the relationships Sami people with disabilities have to others. When we asked one adult informant from the living-conditions study if there were something else he/she wanted to add in regard to school, the response was as follows:

*I have been called a lot of unpleasant things which I can talk a lot about. I have been beaten, I have experienced so much strange, that I haven't been able to relate to someone when it comes to relationships and such things. I can't do it.*

Previous studies conducted among ethnic minority people underline that hate speech directly harms the mental health of its victims (Gelber & McNamara 2016; Hansen et al., 2010; Hansen, 2010). Some participants stressed that they especially experienced offensive statements in the media, such as on radio, television and/or on the Internet, targeting the Sami as a minority group as exhausting and a burden. For example, Johan, a reindeer herder, pointed to newspaper headlines regarding permissions to establish mining, snowmobile trails, etc., stating that the Sami are old-fashioned and out of step with modern society, thereby hindering development. Wherever he goes in his spare time, people confront him with such headlines or court trials and want to discuss these, and he feels that he has to continually defend reindeer herding, Sami interests, and the traditional Sami way of life. Essentially, these kinds of statements do not necessarily qualify as hate speech as this concept is often limited to more offensive forms of stigmatizing, discriminatory, or degrading statements. As underlined by Chakraborti and Garland (2012), the use of the concept “hate” might indicate that hate speech includes only very extreme statements, which means that we might overlook subtler but just as harmful expressions of prejudice.

However, similar to Nadim, Fladmoe, and Enjolras (2018), we argue that, in order to decide whether a statement qualifies as hate speech or not, it must be interpreted in the context in which it is presented. For example, what Johan and other Sami experience as offensive statements probably varies depending on whether these are presented in serious newspapers, radio programs or TV broadcasts or by private individuals on Facebook or other social media. The limit of what they perceive as offensive statements most likely occurs in “serious” media rather, than in private contexts, for instance, on someone’s Facebook page. Furthermore, for Johan and other Sami, the number of statements also seems to be a determinant for whether they perceive statements as offensive or not. This aligns with Chakraborti’s (2010) claim that, to the targeted person or group, it is just as much the sum of many small and less serious offenses that has consequences over time. In Norway, news constantly focuses on conflicting interests between the Sami minority and the Norwegian majority, especially concerning the right to natural resources. It is possible that some statements in these debates concerning conflicting interests might be defined as hate speech, as Sunde (2013) argued that, within political discourse, aggressive and intolerant statements in social debate are included in the understanding of hate speech.

Undoubtedly, some media coverage of Sami topics promote hatred targeting the Sami people and are perceived as offensive. Although these statements in different media might not qualify as hate speech, they are the cause of what the literature refers to as minority stress (Nadal et al., 2011), as described by Johan and others among our participants. This phenomenon underscores how even small experiences of discrimination at all levels have the potential to make members of a minority group feel marginalized in society and experience “minority stress” (Nadal et al., 2011), where it can be defined as an additional burden individuals from stigmatized groups are exposed to due to

their position (Bjørkman, 2012, p. 10). According to Klaus, an adult man with a physical impairment, he deliberately chooses not to read or comment on media coverage regarding the Sami on certain websites and other online media because he knows that these often include racist comments, etc. One might define this as a democratic problem since the amount of harassment at these websites actually limits participation in public debates regarding issues important to Klaus and other Sami.

Furthermore, as a result of more than a century of subjection to forceful assimilation by which Norwegian authorities have attempted to erase Sami culture and language, elderly Sami in particular have experienced extensive harassment and discrimination from the majority society. Consequently, to protect their children from such harassment, many parents have denied them access to their Sami identity and the Sami culture, and not allowed their children to reveal their Sami background in public settings. For example, when Ante was a pupil going on a school excursion decades ago, his parents expressly instructed him not to light the bonfire too quickly because doing so would disclose being Sami (traditionally, Sami have lived close to nature and been competent at tasks like lighting a fire). The fear of degrading and threatening comments related to the assimilation process have, according to Mikkel, up until now made many Sami refrain from teaching their children about their language and culture, with the result that some loathe their Sami background and heritage. The practice of hiding their Sami background and resisting passing on the language and culture described here is undoubtedly a consequence of the historical assimilation process with the discrimination, oppression and hate speech it resulted in.

### **An intersectional perspective on hate speech**

Research primarily addresses either hate speech in general (Gagliardone, Gal, Alves, & Martinez, 2015; Gelber, 2002) or focuses on targeting specific marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities (for example Burch, 2018; Sherry & Neller, 2016) or people with minority ethnic background (for example Baez, 2002; Daniels, 2008). Hence, there is little knowledge about how the combination of membership of two such marginalised groups can affect hate speech experiences and the consequences of such. Thus, we will now take an intersectional perspective, and discuss three examples that illustrate how the combination of being Sami and having a disability can elicit distinct experiences of hate speech.

On several occasions, Per has been threatened and told to stay away by other Sami when they realise that he does not speak Sami. This harassment or hate speech is not motivated by his hearing impairment, but rather by the perpetrators being provoked by his inability to speak the Sami language and thus not perceived as a 'real' Sami. Per is not the only Sami who has encountered hate speech or harassment because of not speaking Sami. However, his impairment was the reason that professionals denied him the opportunity to learn Sami in the first place; they did not expect that he would be capable of learning two languages – an incorrect assumption, since he later learned to speak English very well. Per experienced these negative comments and the related exclusion to

an even harsher degree because they came from individuals from his own ethnic group and hindered him from taking part in his own culture.

Knut's story is another example of how the characteristics of ethnicity and disability interact. At school, peers bully Knut and accuse him of being 'stupid as a Sami'. Yet Knut's impairment (ADHD) makes him easy to provoke and causes his strong emotional reactions. Consequently, it is actually Knut's impairment that makes it so tempting for his peers to harass him.

At first glance, one might doubt whether intersectionality is a relevant perspective when analysing these two examples of hate speech. The content of the hate speech in these situations does not aim at *both disability and Sami background*, and hence does not reflect what Anderson, Ivert and Mellgren (2018) describe as intersecting motives. However, it is the combination of disability and Sami background, that make both Per and Knut targets of hate speech. Even if the hate speech against Knut is motivated specifically by his Saminess, his impairment is what triggers his strong reactions and motivates his peers to torment him. Per is subjected to hate speech for not being perceived as Sami enough as he do not speak Sami, but it is his hearing impairment that is the reason for his lack of language skills. An intersectional perspective provides the possibility to analyse both situations, and show how the intersectionality of being Sami *and* disabled affect the situations and provide the grounds for hate speech. This is something that people who belong to only one of these groups do not experience. Thus, occasionally what creates space for hate speech is the interaction between disability and Saminess, and not the fact of being Sami and disabled.

The third example illustrates how the combination of Saminess and disability not only *causes* hate speech, but also *affects the consequences* of such. Kai has been tormented because of both his impairment and his Sami background and describes how cultural issues have had an impact on how he deals with this. He points to how, according to traditional Sami upbringing, people expect Sami children and youth to solve their own problems, including experiences of harassment or hate speech. This practice can prevent young Sami with disabilities from reporting such experiences. Second, traditional Sami child rearing practices emphasise fostering inner strength and hardiness, using teasing as a training method to obtain this (Javo, Alapack, Heyerdahl, & Røsning, 2003). This custom might make it difficult for Sami children to identify where the boundary lies between teasing as a part of traditional upbringing and hate speech. Third, the Sami people have a long history of discrimination due to a strong government assimilation process that has tried to replace the Sami culture with the Norwegian (Minde, 2003), which might make them extra sensitive to hate speech. Fourth, some people with disabilities experience hate speech so often that they seem to accept this as something that just happens to them (Soorenian, 2019), which might prevent them from reporting these experiences. This tendency was found in a previous study, which suggested that victims of hate crimes tend to refrain from reporting these experiences due to the normalisation of violence (Andersson & Mellgren, 2016).

Briefly summarised, this combination of factors might make it difficult for young Sami with disabilities to understand that the hate speech experienced is not acceptable, and thus prevent them from reporting it. This is very unfortunate, as it may imply a lack of action to stop or prevent hate

speech, and hinder welfare services from providing victims adequate support. The latter is of particular concern, as exposure to hate speech can potentially cause long-term psychological consequences such as anxiety, depression, sleeping problems, insecurity and low self-confidence (Eggebø & Stubberud, 2016).

This chapter has revealed how Sami people with disabilities experience hate speech motivated by both their ethnicity and disabilities. However, according to our analysis based on an intersectional perspective, Sami people with disabilities do not necessarily experience 'double discrimination' (Habib, 1995). As highlighted in the last three examples, the interaction between categories, rather, seem to form distinct experiences of hate speech.

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