

The silence in Sápmi - and the queer Sami breaking it

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of the silence of queerness in Sápmi, and is empirically based on three fieldworks and eight interviews. The thesis will question the silence within a historical perspective, and explore different aspects of the silence in Sápmi today. The main focus will be on queer Sami in Norway, but will also voice queer Sami from Sweden and Finland. I will therefore include a discussion on the silence in the queer community in Norway, but the main focus will be on the silence in Sápmi. My research will also look into what was revealed when the queer Sami in this thesis break the silence. A central finding in my research is the impact of heteronormativity's position in Sápmi, and I will discuss two of the ideals that this system of norms seems to uphold, the masculine ideal for Sami men and the Christian/læstadian ideal. The thesis will also look into the different strategies that queer Sami use in order to break the silence and gain more visibility and acceptance in Sápmi. One of the strategies is to mirror in, and identify with other indigenous people who don't confirm the heteronormative Western gender binary, like the two-spirit movement in the US and Canada. I will also look into Stefan Mikaelssons', the queer major of the Sami Parliament in Sweden, personal strategy to decolonize from the masculine ideal, and the coining of the term "bonju" in the north Sami language.

Key Words: Queer Sami, Silence, Sápmi, Queer Theory, Heteronormativity, Intersectionality, Two-Spirit, Decolonization, Visibility, Strategies, Bonju.

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“The only right thing is to come out and live as you are, even if it means losing your breath for a while”

-Anna

Chapter one: Situating the field

“Good luck in finding informants for that project, my friend. How can you do research on a group of people that doesn’t exist?”

Two years ago, when visiting a Sami friend of mine, I was asked what I wanted to write my thesis on. This was the immediate reaction I got when I answered that I wanted to write it on queer Sami. I had been questioning the low visibility of queer Sami myself, as my google searches had given very few results and I had only found one academic article on gay Sami, dating back to 2002. Still, I was surprised by the ironic comment of my friend, and the silence of queer Sami that this comment indicated evoked great curiosity in me. The same autumn I also meet Stefan Mikaelsson, the queer major of the Sami Parliament in Sweden, for the first time. This happened at the Sami men conference in Tromsø, where he gave a talk on his experiences of being a queer Sami man. In the lunch break, I went over to the Sami president of the Norwegian Sami Parliament at that time. I introduced myself and asked him if he knew of any open queer role models similar to Stefan Mikaelsson at the Norwegian side of Sápmi, but he had no names to give me. This thesis will investigate this low visibility and the silence of queer Sami at the Norwegian side of Sápmi. Further, it will provide an additional glance to the Swedish and Finnish side of Sápmi through Stefan Mikaelsson and other Swedish and Finnish queer Sami voices.

Research questions

This thesis aims to investigate the silencing of queerness in Sápmi, and the main research question will therefore be the following: *What is the silence in Sápmi hiding?* In seeking answers to this question I will also have three additional research questions, which are the following: *Has it always been this silent? Why is it silent, and what are the aspects of the silence? What will be revealed when queer Sami break the silence?*

There are also several goals for my research. It is also a goal that the queer Sami in

this paper are seen and heard on their own terms, and that their voices reach people both inside and outside of Sápmi. I especially hope that their voices can reach other queer Sami as a source of empowerment and support. It is also a goal to contribute to the lack of published academic research on this field. I also aim to make queer Sami more visible through my work, and in doing so I hope that my thesis can contribute to breaking the silence. The research focuses on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, as seven out of eight informants are from Norway. I have aimed to include queer Sami voices from all four National States in Sápmi because, as informant Anna stated, “we don’t see the national borders in Sápmi, we are still one people”. I have not succeeded in meeting, and therefore not in voicing, queer Sami from Russia.

Key words in the field of study

The Sami People

The Sami people are the indigenous people of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Sami have been subjected to assimilation policies in all four countries, and their current numbers are therefore debated (Hætta, 2002). Moreover, the numbers also vary according to how one defines the Sami identity (Ledman, 2012). To be registered in the Norwegian Sami Parliaments electoral register, one has to speak Sami at home, have parents, grandparents or great grandparents who spoke Sami, or have parents who are already in the election register¹. There are also Sami individuals who fulfill these criteria, but who don’t want to be in the election register, or individuals who don’t fulfill the criteria, but who still identify as Sami. However, given the Sami Parliaments criteria, one example on estimates number of Sami is between 35 000 - 40 000 in Norway, 17 000 – 20 000 in Sweden, 5 000 – 6 500 in Finland and 1 500 – 2 000 in Russia (Ledman, 2012: 67).

Sápmi

Sápmi is both a geographical definable area and a term that can be applied on the Sami people as an indigenous nation. As a geographical term, it often applies to the northern areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland and north-west Russia, but as Hætta emphasizes, it can be a problematic term to use geographically, as many Sami live outside of these areas (Hætta, 2008). When the term is referring to the Sami people as

¹ Sametinget.no (03.11.2014)

a nation, however, it acknowledges the geographical variation of Sami settlement, and I will use the term in line with this definition in my thesis. When referring to the geographical Sápmi, I will emphasize this. Sápmi means Samiland in the North Sami language, the language spoken by the majority of Sami. There are nine Sami languages alive today, and there are therefore other versions of the term too, like *Sábme* in the Lule Sami language, or *Saepmie* in the South Sami language².

Queer

Queer is an umbrella term for the different LGBTIQ-identities. LGBTIQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer. Lesbians are women who are attracted to women; gay are men attracted men; bisexuals are attracted to both genders; transgender is an umbrella term for varieties of gender identities – for individuals who don't identify with the gender ascribed to them at birth or who define themselves outside of the gender binary; intersex is a term for individuals born with unclear genitalia, while the term queer is both a umbrella term for all these sexuality and gender identities and an identity by itself for people who reject or identify outside of the heteronormative gender binary. Queers rejects the gender binary ascribing women and men specific qualities that give meaning in opposition to each other. Queer is a critique of the binary way of thinking, which is typical of the Western school of thought and culture (Lorentzen and Mühleinsen, 2006), but has been criticized for reinforcing the binary thinking as the term is in opposition to heteronormativity (Rosenberg, 2002). Heteronormativity is the dominant social perception that all people are heterosexual, that they therefore engage in heterosexual relationships, and that this is the natural way to live (Rosenberg, 2002: 100). Heteronormativity operates within, and reinforces, the binary understanding of gender rejected by queers. Heteronormativity therefore operates as regulative of the norms connected to this binary; these are norms that tell us how to behave, look like and relate to each other in order to be perceived as normal men and women.

My informants represent a wide spectrum of different sexuality and gender identities. Some of my informants identify as queer, others identify with both the term queer and other sexuality or gender identities. Only one of my informants, Mikke, who had gone

² Sametinget.no (03.11.2014)

through a gender reassignment surgery, stated that he didn't identify as queer anymore, but, as he put it himself, "going from a lesbian girl to a heterosexual man, I still challenge the norms". All of my informants have histories and identities with one thing in common: they all challenge heteronormativity, and I will therefore use the term queer as an umbrella term in this thesis.

The statement from this informant also underlines an important point for this thesis. As the Norwegian word for queer, *skeiv*, often is used as a synonym for gay or homosexual in Norway, a common feedback I've got from people hearing that I'm writing on queer Sami, or *skeive samer* in Norwegian, is that they assume I write about homosexual Sami individuals. It is therefore of extra importance for this thesis to underline that I am using the queer as an umbrella-term and not as a synonym for homosexual. The term queer opens up for an inclusion of sexualities and gender identities that are not defined by the two-gender binary system. The use of the term queer in this paper therefore for instance makes it possible to include Sami individuals who identify as heterosexual, but who may have a queer gender identity that does not conform with the gender-binary system.

Queer Sami

Queer Sami are individuals with indigenous status as Sami who identify with queer sexualities or gender identities. In 2009, a Fafo-report³ on lesbians and gays in Sápmi, *Lesbians and Gays in Sápmi – a narrative approach to explore living conditions*, was released. The report gives an estimated number on how many Sami have a homosexual orientation in Norway. The report claims that there are about 3-5 percent people with homosexual orientation in every population, and in regards to the current adult Sami population, the number would make up about 1000-1500 people (Grønningsæter and Nuland, 2009). This is the estimated number of homosexual Sami, but if the report had included Sami with other non-heteronormative sexualities or gender identities, the estimated number of *queer* Sami would be much bigger than 1000-1500 persons in Norway. The number would also be bigger if one would

³ Fafo is a Norwegian independent social research organization. The Fafo-researchers conducts research and write reports on orders, both nationally and internationally. The report on the gay and lesbian Sami was conducted on order by the Norwegian government.

estimate the number of queer Sami in Sápmi.

The geographical Sápmi area is divided by four national states, but as informant Anna put it when referring to Sápmi as a nation, “*We don’t see the national borders in Sápmi, we are still one people*”. Seven of eight informants in this paper have Norwegian citizenship, and number eight is from Sweden. Finnish queer Sami will be voiced in this thesis through the findings from my fieldworks, but there are no Russian queer Sami represented in this paper.

Non-gendered pronoun

All of my queer Sami informants use the pronouns he or she, but there are Norwegian queers referred to in this thesis who prefers the gender neutral pronoun *they*. This is the English translation of the gender neutral pronoun *hen* in Swedish and Norwegian. Individuals who identify outside of the gender binary often prefer gender neutral pronouns, but I have also used gender neutral pronoun in this thesis if I haven’t been sure of what people identify with.

Methods

Fieldworks

This thesis is based on qualitative methods, and my empirical data has been obtained through three fieldwork investigations and eight interviews. The method of fieldwork has its roots in social anthropology. It is the anthropologist Bronislaw Kaspar Malinowski (1884-1942) who has the honor of developing this qualitative method, after he spent three years among the Trobrianders in the Trobriand Islands on Papa New Guinea in 1915-1918, and broke with the quantitative method of the so-called “armchair-anthropologist” at the time, who did their analyses based on letters and notes they had received from travelers or missionaries (Hylland Eriksen, 1993). Today, the method of fieldwork and the participant observation that it requires is not only limited to the anthropological discipline, but in James Spradly’s words, it has spread like a quiet revolution through the social sciences and the many applied disciplines (Spradley, 1980: preference) As Spradly so poetically describes it, the ethnographic revolution has overflowed the banks of anthropology like a stream that rises slowly, and then spills over its banks, sending rivulets of water in many directions (Spradley, 1980: preference).

I have my background in anthropology, but my fieldwork differs from what can be expected from an anthropologist in several ways. First of all, I have not conducted fieldwork in a geographically limited place where I have lived among the researched for a longer period of time. As queer Sami don't live in a geographically limited place, I've had to travel to places where I've hoped there is a queer Sami representation, or where I knew queer Sami would meet, for my fieldworks. Secondly, and as I will discuss later in this thesis, my positioning as a researcher opened up for a more active role in the field. This position only allowed me to do participant observation at my first fieldwork, where I actually did not meet any queer Sami. Participant observation aims to observe social relations between informants, but my empirical data and analyzes is mostly based on the spoken word, where the discussions at my last two fieldworks and my interview lays the ground. My fieldworks found place at the following places and time:

- Luleå Pride, in Luleå, Sweden, 12 – 17th of June 2013
- Pride House, in Oslo, Norway, 21-23rd of June 2013
- The Queering Sápmi release, in Umeå, Sweden, 20-22nd of September 2013

Interviews

James Spradley distinguishes between informal and formal interviews. Informal interviews are spontaneous questions asked by the researcher at fieldwork, while formal interviews are requested interviews that takes place at an appointed time and place during fieldwork (Spradley, 1980). I base most of my work on the formal interviews, eight of them all in all. They all took place at an appointed time and place, but only one of them during fieldwork. I did, however, meet several of my informants during fieldwork and made appointments to meet with them again later. The rest of my informants I got in contact with through other channels. Through friends, I established contact with several queer Sami, but only one of them said yes to my request. I also got in touch with one person through the online queer website Gaysir.no and another person I found through Facebook after reading about him in the newspaper. The last interview that I conducted was conducted on request from a journalist working for Gaysir.no. My article, a portrait interview of the queer Sami

activist Lemet from Karasjok, was published in November 2013 on Gaysir.no, but the interview will also be included in this thesis.

The structure of my interviews was of the kind Chilisa calls *the unstructured or non-standardized interview structure*. The unstructured interview starts with the researcher asking a general question in the field of study and is usually accompanied by a list of topics to be covered in the interview (Chilisa, 2012: 205). I had prepared a set of questions in advance of my interviews and arranged them under the different topics that I wanted to talk about. I brought the list of topics with me to the interviews, to make sure that we had talked about all the topics, but I did not necessarily ask all the questions I had listed. The list of topics functioned as support, but I got less and less dependent on it. At my last interview, I did not even bring the list.

Chilisa writes that this kind of interview structure allows for flexibility and makes it possible for the researcher to follow the interest and thought of informants, and the interviewer should freely ask questions in any order, depending on the answers (Chilisa, 2012: 205). As I tried to follow Chilisa's advice and discovered that this allowed the informants to address their own concerns, something that also allowed me to add new questions to my list as the interviews went on. Moreover, the structure raised some challenges, as the unstructured approach often gave a more informal framing of the interview, which could result in the interview feeling more like a conversation between friends. As I discuss later, this led several times to me having to negotiate my role.

The types of questions I asked were the kind Michael Patton terms *descriptive questions* and *opinion and value questions*. When the researcher asks descriptive questions, she asks the participants to talk about the social scene with which they are familiar. The opinion and value questions are the questions that seek understanding on how research participants think about the things they do and experience. (Patton in Chilisa, 2012: 206). The descriptive questions were particularly helpful for me in getting insight in my informants' experiences of being queer in Sápmi, a social scene that I was not so familiar with in my capacity of a Norwegian researcher. The opinion and value questions opened up for my informants' opinions and explanations on these experiences.

Informants

Five of my informants are referred to in this paper by their real names. They are open about their queerness, and have appeared in the media talking about it. Chilisa refers to Willson, who writes on the power that lies in revealing the names of informants, if they allow it. Even if it goes against most university ethical research policies, Willson argues that naming the informants creates accountable relationships between informants and researcher, as the information can be tracked back to the concrete informant (Willson in Chilisa, 2012: 121-2). The five informants with their names revealed are open about who they are and have all appeared in media talking about being queer and Sami. I have therefore chosen to refer to them by their real names, as they have all agreed to it and as I find it important in terms of visibility. Three of my informants also wish to stay anonymous, and two of them have been given pseudonyms. The third is not quoted directly, and has therefore not received one. My informants are the following persons:

- Stefan Mikaelsson, heterosexual and queer Sami Parliament mayor in Sweden
- Svein Henriksen, homosexual man
- Lemet, homosexual man
- Mikke, heterosexual man, who just transitioned from woman to man
- Chris, pansexual man, who is waiting for his ftm⁴ transitional surgery
- Andreas, somewhere between gay and bisexual, man
- Anna, lesbian woman
- Lesbian woman

Positioning

I have conducted my research and I am writing from the position of an activist researcher. Activist research calls for the researcher to work from a non-neutral place and to form political alignment with the researched (Hale, 2006). Taking this position has therefore enabled me to involve politically in the field of research and with the researched individuals. Chilisa writes that through involving the researched as much as possible in the research process, the researcher should aim to work together with the researched for change (Chilisa, 2012). Chilisa refers to Paulo Freire's work, who

⁴ Female to male

emphasizes the importance of the activist researcher's critical consciousness. Through critical consciousness, the researcher avoids to not just write about, but rather criticizes, the mechanisms oppressing the researched. The researcher should involve in political alignment with the researched, and with her work support and work together with the research against oppressive mechanisms (Chilisa, 2012: 235). Chilisa writes the researcher is enabled to empower the researched through working together with the researched for political change, as this way of working opens up for the researched to learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions. This also opens up for the researched to take action to change the way they think about and do things (Chilisa, 2012: 235).

The position of an activist researcher enabled me to work actively with the researched towards the goal of this thesis; to work for more visibility of queer Sami and through this also contribute in breaking the silence. The position of a co-activist allowed for involvement in the field, in particular during my second and third fieldwork: in Oslo, I took initiative and led a panel discussion, and in Umeå, I participated actively in discussions with queer Sami in workshops. I have not managed to stay in contact with all of my informants after my fieldworks and interviews, but I have maintained contact with several of them, and I have also discussed and verified data with them as I have been writing. The position of a co-activist also enabled me in engaging people from my personal network of people who work with queer politics in the field and help in networking between queer Sami and people who works in queer politics. The position of an activist also enabled me to publish an article for Gaysir.no, and I have also given an interview about my project on NRK radio, in the local newspapers iTromsø and Hamar Arbeiderblad, and commented an article on queer Sami in Blikk.

Reflexivity

Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that “[w]e have often allowed our histories to be told, and we have become outsiders as we have heard them being retold” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 33). As a non-indigenous or non-Sami researcher, I am an outsider in my field of research, and therefore need to bring Tuhiwai Smith's words with me, to avoid that my informants feel like outsiders when I retell their stories. Tuhiwai Smith also reminds us that indigenous histories often have been retold by the condemning eyes of the colonizer (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), and being

aware of the Sami history in Norway, I am therefore especially aware of my position as a Norwegian while writing. I am an outsider as a non-indigenous person, but I am also an insider, as I also share the queer identity with my informants. It is therefore that I share experiences with queer Sami, that a non-queer Sami researcher would not.

Different roles

The political participation that the position of an activist researcher opened up for, especially during my fieldworks in Oslo and Umeå, also affected my role in relation to some of my informants. As I met and got to know several of my informants under my fieldworks in Oslo and Umeå, I established a relationship with them at a social arena where I had been visible and participated in the political discussions. When I met up with these informants again at a later point for our interview, I discovered that this had affected my relationship with several of my informants in terms of roles.

An activist researcher is also a co-activist, and this role had already been activated in relation to several of my informants at my fieldworks. Co-activists share values and visions, and I could therefore also feel the friendly ties that had been established with some informants. The roles of a co-activist and friend can positively affect the relationship in terms of trust, as it can be easier to trust and open up before a co-activist and friend, than it might be in the case of a researcher. When these roles are activated during an interview, it can therefore be problematic and put the informant in a vulnerable position, as one might give different information to someone you consider a friend or ally, than to someone you relate to in the role of a researcher.

My interviews can therefore be divided into two groups. With the first group of informants, a relationship based on my political participation was already established. With the second group of informants, no relationship was established yet, as we hadn't met in person before. With the first group of informants I therefore often had to negotiate about my roles, to make sure that I was given information in the role of a researcher and not a friend.

Wadel defines a role as the rights and duties connected to a status. Status is the social relation between two people, like student and teacher, girlfriend and girlfriend, boyfriend and girlfriend, mother and daughter, or researcher and researched. A role is

a status that is activated (Wadel, 1988: 70). The duties that are connected to roles are performed by expected behavior. By not confirming this expectations, it is therefore possible to activate other roles. Behaving like expected by other roles can therefore help in activating or in being ascribes these roles by others (Wadel, 1988).

Wadel further writes that social environments and social situations can also affect and activate roles (Wadel, 1988: 71). The unstructured interview often made the interviews feel more like conversations, something that could give the social situation a more informal framing and therefore effect the role as a friend more then as a researcher.

In negotiating about the role as a researcher I therefore had to act in line the expected behavior of a researcher as much as possible, and to try to give the social environment in which the interviews found place a more formal framing. When the unstructured interview for example opened up for the informants to ask me questions back, or when two of them started to ask me how the Sami friends we have in common were doing, I tried to turn the conversation back to be about them. My role of an insider as queer also opened up for some to ask me about my personal experiences when we discussed queer issues.

I tried to behave like expected by a researcher, asking questions and taking notes, and I tried to give the social environment a more formal framing by placing material objects like a tape recorder on the table between us, having the list with questions in front of me and a paper folder marked with “Centre for Sami Studies”. Still, I discovered that the status of a friend was not so negotiable, and I have therefore been extra careful with the material from these informants, and I have left out parts where it is not clear whether the information was given to me in the role as a friend or not.

Previous research

There is not much previous research done on the topic of queer Sami, and the Fafo-report states that this is just another example of the invisibility of queer Sami. It goes on stating that in the field of gay and lesbian studies, queer Sami individuals seem to have been “forgotten” (Grønningsæter and Nuland, 2009: 7). The same goes in regard of gender studies and indigenous studies. The only academic article that I found when

I set out to do this research comes from the field of sociology and dates back to 2002. This is Marianne Giertsens' work "*En minoritet i minoriteten – homofile i samiske miljø og samer i det homofile miljø*" [A minority within the minority – gay in the Sami environment and Sami in the gay environment], where she writes about being gay in Sami environments and Sami in gay environments. Giertsens has not done fieldwork or interviews with gay Sami, but bases her work on Goffmans writings on stigma, and in doing so she also presents strategies that she assumes gay Sami use in order to avoid stigma. It's also been brought to my attention that Anne Kalstad Mikkelsen recently has published an article on gay Sami, but as I got to know this at the last phase of my research process, I have not used this article in my work. Besides these two articles, a Fafo-report on the living conditions on gays in Sápmi, *Lesbians and Gays in Sápmi – a Narrative approach to explore living conditions*, was published in 2009. The report on gay and lesbian Sami was following up on the Fafo-report on Norwegian lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans persons from 2008, commissioned by the Norwegian governmental plan of action to "improve the quality of life for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans persons in Norway, 2009-2012" (Grønningsæter and Nuland, 2009: 7). The report is based on interviews with eight queer Sami, four lesbian women, one bisexual woman and three gay men, and it focus on the different aspects of being lesbian and gay in Sápmi. What the two articles and the report have in common is that they focus on queer Sami who don't confirm the sexual aspect of heteronormativity, but does not mention gender identity. The book, "Queering Sápmi, Sami life stories beyond the norm", a book that tells 31 queer Sami life stories, includes queer Sami who don't confirm other aspects of heteronormativity either, such as gender identities and polyamory. The book is the results of the Queering Sápmi project, a project I will return to and elaborate on in Chapter 3, where I present my fieldwork at the release of this book in Umeå, Sweden.

Theoretical Framework

Queer Theory

Queer theory will be the main theoretical framework of this thesis. Queer theory should not be seen as one single theory in itself, but rather as a critical perspective that unifies scholars from different academic fields who all share the critical view on heterosexuality (Priour and Moseng, 2000). Queer theory is centered around a critique

of heteronormativity, and as Kulick emphasizes, what all queer theorists can agree on is that heteronormativity is the problem that should be explained, rather than the queer deviants that it is producing (Kulick in Rosenberg, 2002: 87).

The word “queer” has its etymological origin in the English language. The term has been used since the early 1500’s to denote individuals who are attracted by and feels a sexual desire for the same sex. Historically, the word has been used as a synonym for adjectives like “deviant, unconventional, eccentric, worthless, false” (Bolsø, 2010: 56), but was reclaimed by the political activist group Queer Nation, who in the Pride Parade in New York in 1990 handed out flyers where they stated “We’re here, were queer, get used to it!” (Rosenberg, 2002).

It is the literature scholar Teresa De Lauretis who gets the honor of introducing queer theory to academia. In October 1989, she participated at a film and videoconference, arranged by the Film Archives in New York, where she heard the word being used. De Lauretis was unaware of the political activism of Queer Nation that found place at the same time (Bolsø, 2010). In February 1990, a conference for scholars who were interested in engaging in queer theory was held at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The conference resulted in a special edition of the Feministic Cultural Studies journal *Difference*, titled *Queer theory: lesbian and gay sexualities*, and De Lauretis was guest editor. The same year, the leading queer theorist of today, Judith Butler, published her first book *Gender Trouble* and another central queer theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, published *Epistemology of the Closet*, two books that would become very central and influential in the field of queer theory. Another influential and central queer theorist, Michael Warner published *Fear of a Queer Planet* in 1993, the same year that Butler published her second book *Critically Queer*, and the year after she published *Against Proper Objects* (Rosenberg, 2002).

Queer theory grew out of the field of lesbian feminist theory and gay studies, but also have its roots in French post structuralism. Michal Foucault has become one of the most central thinkers in the field, even if queer theory appeared after his death (Bolsø, 2010). Through Judith Butler drawing on his thoughts and analyzing the relation between discourse, knowledge and power, and through his book *The History of Sexuality*, where he is analyzing the gender and sexuality categories that are taken for

granted and the instability in these, he is also keeping this central position in the field (Lorentzen and Mühleisen, 2006: 139). Other influences from French post-structuralism are Jacques Lacans' psychoanalytic models of unstable identities and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of binary and linguistic structures (Lorentzen and Mühleisen, 2006: 139).

Jacques Derrida emphasizes how Western thought and language are constructed around the binary (Sandoval, 2000). Binaries are given meaning in opposition to each other, and according to Judith Butler, the binary man and woman are given meaning within the ruling discourse of what's seen as feminine and masculine (Rosenberg, 2007). Judith Butler also emphasizes that gender is performed and repeated within these discourses. This simply means that for Butler, gender is not something you are, but something you do. According to her "no-one really is a gender from the start, it is produced and reproduced within the discourses all the time"⁵. With this Butler also emphasizes that gender is socially constructed (Rosenberg, 2007: 20). The gender trouble occurs when a person who is born in a female body performs masculinity, or the other way around, or when same-sex sexuality or relationships are performed (Rosenberg, 2007).

The queer theoretical perspective aims to identify and deconstruct heteronormativity, and through this to destabilize the heteronormative world order (Bech, 2003). The approach acknowledges that norms connected to gender and sexuality are socially constructed, but through its deconstruction and analysis, the queer theorist should show how they appear as real in people's lives. To do this, the queer theorist should identify, describe and analyze heteronormativity, and how it intersects with other system of norms (Rosenberg, 2002).

An example of how the socially constructed heteronormativity appears as real in people's lives is when the norm-breakers are sanctioned. Heteronormativity can lead to negative sanctioning for those breaking with it, and norm-breakers risk violence, harassment, discrimination, and violation of human rights (Lorentzen and Mühleisen, 2006: 143). One is not only a norm-breakage from heteronormativity if one has a

⁵ Butler in *Your Behavior Creates Your Gender*, www.youtube.com (15.11.2014)

queer sexuality, but also if one in Judith Butler's term does not perform gender in line with the ruling femininity and masculinity discourse that impose the ideal-gender norms⁶. The ideal sexuality and gender norms are regulated by what Judith Butler terms, "the heterosexual matrix", this is the binary opposition of man and woman and the expected heterosexual relation between these two (Rosenberg, 2007). Judith Butler refers to an eighteen years old boy in Main, New England, US who was murdered by three classmates for his feminine way of walking – he had a distinct switch in his hips, and says that "even a walk can be a dangerous thing", you can even be sanctioned with murder⁷.

Adopting a queer theoretical approach to this thesis will entail an investigation of whether heteronormativity has any connection to the silence in Sápmi, and in line with Rosenberg's words, identify, describe and analyze its position if I find it, and how it intersect with other systems of norms (Rosenberg, 2002). It will also entail having a critical approach to the Western binary thought. In doing this, I will also use the work of different queer theorists and scholars with a queer theoretical perspective, like Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Arnfinn Andersen and Tiina Rosenberg.

As this is a thesis in indigenous studies, the work of queer theorists who write, are applied in, or are written from the fields of in indigenous or native studies are most preferable. There is however a lack of such, and I have found no Sami scholars or scholars doing Sami-related research who engage in queer theory. There are, however, scholars from the field of indigenous studies or native studies who implement the queer theoretical approach in their work abroad, such as Chris Finley, Andrea Smith, Scott Lauria Morgensen, Qwo-Li Driskill, and Daniel Heath Justice. Their work has been very beneficial and highly valued for this thesis, and using and referring to their work has therefore also been important for me in adopting a queer theoretical approach for this thesis.

⁶ Butler in *Examined Life - Judith Butler & Sunaura Taylor*, www.youtube.com (15.11.2014)

⁷ Butler in *Examined Life - Judith Butler & Sunaura Taylor*, www.youtube.com (15.11.2014)

Chris Finley also calls for more native studies scholars to integrate queer theory into their work. Finley writes that virtually no native studies scholars engage in queer theory, something that contributes to a heteronormative framing of their work on native communities (Finley, Smith, 2010: 1). Finley also argues that by putting native studies and queer studies in dialogue creates further possibilities to decolonize native communities (Finley, 2011: 41) and that that by linking native studies and queer theory one can open up for more open, sex positive, queer positive and friendly discussions of sexuality in both native communities and native studies (Finley, 2011: 32). As Finley also writes, “it is time to bring sexy back to Native Studies and quit pretending we are boring and pure and do not think or write about sex. We are alive, we are sexy, and some of us Natives are queer” (Finley, Smith, 2011: 43). This thesis will show that there are also many queer Sami out there, who are alive, sexy, and queer!

Intersectionality and black feminism

Tiina Rosenberg draws on Lindholm, when she asks if the queer theory is enough to lean on when analyzing power and repression (Rosenberg, 2002: 100). Queer Sami share their intersectional position with black feminists, and in Chapter 3 in particular, I therefore also draw on the intersectional work of the black feminists bell hooks, who writes her name in small letters, and Audre Lord. Intersectionality is a term that originally was applied to the simultaneous impact of race, gender, and class on the lives of Black women (Davis and Crenshaw in Marinucci, 2010: 130), but can also be used for other groups of people that are suppressed by more than one power structure. bell hooks’ terms “center” and “margin” have been especially efficient tools for structuring my findings in analyzing the silence. hooks defines center as where the privilege is located, while minorities are located in the margin. I find bell hooks work very inspiring, as she her writings is focused on the power that is in the margin.

Thesis outline

The following chapter will give a short presentation on Sami and queer history in Norway. Through the queer Sami voiced in this chapter, I will also investigate the silence in a historical perspective. As these voices express that they feel connected to other indigenous individuals who don’t confirm the heteronormative ideal, the

discussion in this chapter will also be raised to an international level.

The third chapter will look into the silence. I will start with a presentation of my research process that led me to find the silence, and then a presentation of my fieldworks will follow. I will then move on to discuss the silence of queer Sami in the queer community, before I move on to a discussion of the different aspects of the silence in Sápmi.

The fourth chapter will investigate what will be revealed when the queer Sami break the silence. The chapter will start with a discussion on heteronormativity in Sápmi, and then explore two of the ideals that seem to support its position, the masculine and the Christian/Læstadian ideal. The queer Sami breaking the silence have also revealed three of the strategies queer Sami use in breaking it and gaining more visibility in Sápmi. The first is Stefan Mikaelsson's personal strategy to destabilize the masculine ideal, the second is identifying with the two-spirit movement as a decolonization strategy, and the third is coining of the term *bonju* to gain more visibility in Sápmi.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter.

Chapter two: Historical background

Introduction

There is a lack of written historical sources on queer Sami in Sápmi. As this chapter aims to present the historical background of my field of research, it will start by presenting the overviews of both Sami and queer history in Norway. Through the voices of my informants and two contemporary Sami artist, one of them queer, I will then move on to a discussion of the roles of queers in Sápmi in a historical context. This will also be discussed and investigated through the empirical data from other indigenous groups and the two-spirit movement in the US and Canada.

The Sami history in Norway

The Sami in Norway have been exposed for assimilation policies from the Norwegian State. As the historian Henry Minde writes, by looking back at history, one can safely conclude that the State's efforts to make the Sami put away their language, and to change the basic values of their culture to replace them with a Norwegian national identity have been extensive, prolonged and determined (Minde, Aas and Vestgården, 2014: 66). In 1848, the Parliament requested the government to carry out an “investigation to whether it would be possible to educate the Lapps, especially those living in the coastal areas, in the Norwegian language, and to bring enlightenment to these people” (Hætta, 2008: 44). This marked the start of what has later been termed as the norwegianisation process – a process aimed at assimilating the Sami into Norwegian culture and language.

Around the same time, a religious revival found place in Sápmi. The work of the priest Lars Levi Læstadius (1800-1861) from Karesuando in Sweden marked the start of a pietistic movement in Sápmi, that later became known as *læstadianism*. Læstadius used images rooted in the Sami culture in his preaches, which helped the Sami in relating to his words. Læstadianism soon became a socio-religious movement among the Sami, and as they were dominating in numbers, it became known as “a

Sami movement” (Jensen, 2005: 26). In November 1852, there was a rebellion in Kautokeino, where Sami who were a part of this new religious movement whipped the rector and murdered the merchant and the sheriff. The rebels were eventually overpowered and the l estadian movement got more silent after this (H etta, 2008: 24), but it still stands strong as a pietistic Christian movement in S apmi today.

Forced schooling of Sami children in the north became the main tool of the norwegianisation process. Historian Henry Minde quotes his colleague, Einar Niemi, as he writes “the school became the battlefield of the norwegianisation policy, with the teachers as frontline soldiers” (Niemi in Minde, 2005: 7). Through this, the Sami children also became the main target for the assimilation policies, and removing the children from their Sami speaking families and their culture to place them in boarding schools was the main strategy. The boarding schools were especially widespread in the inland of Finnmark, as this was an area where reindeer herding stood strong and many Sami families therefore had a nomadic lifestyle. As the Sami children and their families were moving with the reindeer herd on the tundra, boarding schools were used to exert more extensive control than in the coastal area, where the Sami to a greater degree were settled. In Finnmark alone, there were 50 boarding schools and 70 school rooms during the norwegianisation process (H etta, 2008: 44).

Assimilation policies, and boarding schools for indigenous children as a strategy in this, are a part of the Sami history that is shared with other indigenous peoples on an international level. Jeffery Sisson writes that, viewed from the perspective of indigenous people, assimilation was instead a separation, often violent – of kin, people from their homes, people from their cultures and, especially, children from their parents and families. Sami children therefore became, like many other indigenous children, the particular targets of the assimilative separations (Sisson, 2006: 85-86).

In 1880, the teachers who taught Sami children were given an instruction that manifested the aims of the norwegianisation process once and for all. The instruction declared restrictions of the use of the Sami language in the classroom, both for the teachers and the Sami children. The instruction only allowed the teachers to use the Sami language if they evaluated it as highly necessary to have the Sami children

understand a Norwegian word. After the introduction of this instruction, all Sami children had to read and write in Norwegian. Teachers who could prove progress in the Sami children's mastering of the Norwegian language got a wage raise. The instruction was reinforced in 1889, now to fully restrict the use of the Sami language in class (Minde, 2005: 14). The instruction now also commanded the teachers to control that the Sami language not was used during recess. This instruction, aiming to silence the Sami language and replace it with Norwegian was applicable to the late 1950s, and in some areas it was still applicable to the 1960s (Minde, 2005). The instruction was central and regulative for the norwegianisation process, and when it appealed, it had given results. Many individuals and families who once were Sami, now considered themselves to be Norwegians, especially in the costal areas. The process had also resulted in a stigmatization of the Sami identity (Eidheim, 1969).

In the 1970 and 1980, however, the Sami identity found empowerment through the rise of a new political and cultural movement, called ČSV, short for *Čájehekot Sámi Vuoinnna* meaning “Show the Sami Spirit”. Anders Guttormsen, the Sami man behind the slogan, wrote that it also meant “Long live all that belongs to the Sami” (Bjørklund, 2000: 28). It was a time of cultural revitalization and political mobilization, also at an international indigenous level, where Sami individuals were also active in forming an international indigenous political platform. In 1975, indigenous delegates from North and South America, Australia, New Zealand and Sami representatives from Norway and Sweden met in Canada to work on a declaration for indigenous people on a global level. Based on their shared histories of colonial oppression, they declared that they would work together for the continued existence of their peoples, and vowed that they would again take control over their own destinies, and with that the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) saw the light of the day (Sissons, 2005: 22). The establishment of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples also helped to pave the way for the establishment of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP), that was set up by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1982 (Sissons, 2005: 22).

The ČSV-movement raised awareness of the harm done to the Sami culture and people through the norwegianisation process, but also on the interventions still happening in their indigenous homeland, the land of their ancestors, in the

geographical Sápmi. According to Henry Minde, the Alta controversy of 1979-81, when the government planned to dam the Alta-river, became the symbol of the Sami fight against cultural discrimination and for collective respect, for political autonomy and material rights (Minde, 2005: 7). The Sami political mobilization gained support from environmentalists and other allies, and their demonstrations got international media attention.

The Alta affair was defined by the media as both a Sami matter and an indigenous people's matter (Minde, 2003: 101). This forced the Norwegian government to act, and in 1989 Norway was the first state to ratify the ILO convention nr.169, which acknowledges the Sami people's status as indigenous people of Norway, which gives rights to land and water (Minde, 2003: 101). The same year the Sami Parliament was established⁸, and the Norwegian king, King Olav V, gave a public apology for the harm caused by the norwegianisation process. Today, the Sami Parliament works as a consultative body for the Norwegian government for funding the development of Sami language and culture. Sami children today have the right to receive Sami language lessons in the Norwegian school system. In the so called core-Sami areas in the municipalities of Kautokeino, Karasjok, Nesseby, Tana and Porsanger, Sami is the first language both in some schools and public institutions⁹.

Queer history in Norway

In 1969, a young woman phones the radio show "Partiene Svarer" (the Parties Answer) on the national radio station, NRK. She had told the producers in advance that she had a question about agricultural politics, but once on air she asks the representatives from the political party Høyre about their opinion on the penalty clause §213, the paragraph in Norwegian law that criminalized homosexuality and homosexual behavior between men. This is Kim Friele's first appearance in media with her full name revealed, and by this she becomes the first publicly open homosexual person in Norway (Rein Seehuus, 2009). At this point Friele was the chairman for DNF-48, Det Norske Forbund av 1948, Norway's first gay organization. She had been elected to this position in 1966, and she was the first female and openly gay leader of the organization (Nyhuus, 2001). Friele and the work of DNF-48, today

⁸ www.sametinget.no (03.11.2014)

⁹ www.sametinget.no (03.11.2014)

known as LLH¹⁰, would come to hold a central position in the political battles and achievements of gays and lesbians in the years to follow.

Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1972, when penalty clause §213 finally was appealed. The work of Friele and DNF-48, and the pressure they put on the government was central in this. The work of Kim Friele, DNF-48 and other queer activists and organizations in the years to come has resulted in gaining several rights for people with queer sexualities. Homosexual behavior between women has never been criminalized, but has been listed in the diagnostic manual of Norsk Psykiatrisk Forening (the Norwegian Psychiatric Association) as a mental disorder for both men and women. After pressure from Kim Friele and DNF-48 it was removed from the at the annual NPF convention in 1977 (Nyhuus, 2001).

The decriminalization and de-diagnosing of homosexuality led to more and more homosexual men and women coming out, and queer activism in the years to come resulted in a legal protection against discrimination of homosexual people, which was enforced by law in 1981 (Hennum in Andersen, 2009: 126). In 1993, *partnerskapsloven*, a partnership law enabling same-sex marriage, was pushed through, but homosexuals and heterosexuals did not have equal rights in terms of church marriage, adoption of children, including stepchildren adoption, and the right to assisted fertilization, before the law was reinforced again in 2009 to enable this (Andersen, 2009).

Homosexuals and heterosexuals now share what Arnfinn Andersen calls *sexual citizenship*, in Norway, meaning that homosexuals and heterosexuals have the same rights and duties in relation to the State. These rights and duties ensure the individual's participation and protection within the framework of the National State, which are developed on the basis of democratic processes (Andersen, 2009: 123).

The queer history in Norway shows great achievements in regard to queer sexuality rights, but there is still a long way to go in regards to queer gender rights. Norway has received criticism from Amnesty International for the treatment of transgendered

¹⁰ Landsforeningen for lesbiske, homofile, bifile og transpersoner (the national Association for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people)

persons, and claims have been raised that basic human rights are being violated. Transgender is both an umbrella-term and an identity in itself, and applies to people who don't identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. Transgendered persons who qualify to be diagnosed with F64.O, transsexualism, have received gender reassignment surgeries through the public health care system in Norway since 1962 (Folgerø and Hellesund: 2009). To qualify for this surgery, however, one has to match a criteria standard that confirms to the binary gender system. Transgendered persons who receive this surgery can therefore often tell stories about “being born in the wrong body”; they identify and feel like a boy but are born in a female body, or the other way around. These are stories that confirm the gender binary.

Transgendered persons who identify outside of the gender binary, who reject it or simply don't confirm it, have less of a chance and no rights in getting access to the surgery they need to have their identities match their bodies, or to be prescribed hormones through the public health care system, something that Amnesty International have criticized. Amnesty International has also criticized the forced sterilization that transgendered persons must undergo in order to receive the reassigned surgery that they need¹¹, and the practice has been criticized by the European court of Human Rights, as it violates fundamental human rights. As LLH, TGEU Europe¹² and ILGA Europe¹³ writes in their report for the European Social Charter and the Council of Europe that is administrating the European court of Human Rights; “it is of great concern to us that transgender people appear to be the only group in Europe, subjected to legally prescribed, state enforced sterilization”¹⁴. Sterilization is required for transgendered persons to legally change their gender, and to be recognized by the state to receive this legal gender recognition through changes in the passports. One of my informants, Mikke, has gone through a gender reassignment surgery and was recently interviewed by NRK, where he stated the following: “When the ability to have children was taken away from me, I should at least have been given an alternative. People like me should get the same right to get

¹¹ www.nrk.no/norge/amnesty-kritiserer-norge-i-rapport-1.11519232 (23.11.2014)

¹² Transgender Europe

¹³ Equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Europe

¹⁴ www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/reporting/statereports/CommentsILGANorway2013_en.pdf (23.11.2014)

children, just as people who have not been through such a process.”¹⁵

The work done by queer activists, organizations and supporters has, however also given some positive recent results. On January 1, 2014, the law against discrimination based on sexual orientation was reinforced to also include transgendered persons¹⁶. In the summer of 2014, the Norwegian tax department also decided to introduce gender-neutral national security numbers, something that was decided after feedback from *groups in society that wish for this to change*¹⁷. The changes in the Norwegian tax departments system will be implemented before 2030, when the old system expires.

Queer in a historical perspective in Sápmi

Roles to fill

“I believe that Sápmi was a much more open society before Christianity came and took over and set more boundaries. Because there are very strict rules in the Bible, to put it like that. That concerns gender roles too. So when Christianity was forced on us, I believe that things took a bit different direction, actually. This is what I think.”

-Mikke

“Before the missionaries arrived in Sápmi, I believe that we gays were associated with the sacred. It is said that the noaidies, the Sami shamans, were gay. They had aspects of both genders, they were both feminine and masculine.

-Lemet

The overview of the Sami history in Norway shows how governmental policies have aimed to assimilate the Sami into Norwegian culture and language. Chilisa writes that assimilation is a colonial strategy, and defines colonialism as the subjugation of one

¹⁵ www.nrk.no/nordnytt/en-bokstav-har-gjort-mikke-barnlos-1.11907585 (23.11.2014)

¹⁶ www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/aktuelt/nyheter/2013/ny-diskrimineringslovgivning-trer-i-kraf.html?id=748269 (23.11.2014)

¹⁷ www.tv2.no/a/5754559 (23.11.2014)

group by another (Young in Chilisa, 2012: 9). So far, Chilisa's definition is in line with what this chapter has shown of the Sami history. Chilisa goes on to argue that colonialism also involve loss of territory, accompanied with the destruction of political, social and economic systems, leading to political control and economic dependence of the West (Chilisa, 2012: 9). After two years at the indigenous master program at UiT, I have noticed that the term colonialism is seldom applied to the Sami in Norway, even if one based on Chilisa's definition clearly can argue that the Sami in Norway have been colonialized. I will leave this discussion here, as the main point of this chapter is to underline the centuries of missionary work and assimilation policies towards the Sami in Norway. However, when Mikke and Lemet talk about how they believe that Sápmi was more open to queers before Christian influences, one should also acknowledge the de-colonial aspect of such statements. Indigenous decolonialism is connected to questioning or rejecting what one has been assimilated into, and finding strategies to go back to what's been lost under colonial rule (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Although Mikke, Lemet and other queer Sami voices in this thesis talk about how they believe things were different before the Christian influence and the assimilation policies towards the Sami, I will use decolonization as an analytical term in this paper, and will first and foremost refer to it in chapter four. The term will also find its place in this thesis, as I also heard it being used by queer Sami at my fieldwork in Umeå, and as one of my informants, Stefan Mikaelsson from the Swedish side of Sápmi, also used this term himself.

Mikke says he believes that Sápmi was more open for both queer sexualities and gender roles before the Christian influences. Lemet also connects queerness to the sacred sphere. Before the missionaries arrived in Sápmi, he says, he believes that gay Sami had their roles to fill in Sápmi, as they were shamans. Lemet shares this view with the queer Sami artist Giert Rognli. At the annual Easter festival in Kautokeino in 2009, Rognli had a premiere on his short movie "the spiritual kiss". In an interview with the queer online newspaper blikk.no¹⁸, Rognli says that he aims to throw light on gay Sami men as a positive recourse in the Sami communities, because most gay Sami men still hide their sexual orientation. He states the following about his five-minute long movie:

¹⁸ www.blikk.no/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=3897:film-om-samiske-homser&Itemid=10 (01.12.2014)

“I am comparing gay Sami men before and now. In the old culture they were seen as holders of a strong spiritual power, they were recognized shamans. The Sami community has lost a lot along the way. Now, homosexuality is often a taboo, connected to sin and shame in the Sami areas. We are not seen as good role models.”

-Gjert Rognli, in *blikk.no*

The Sami shaman is called *noaidi*. The old sources on Sami religion are written by the early missionaries, who describe the Sami religion as based on an animistic worldview. Hætta writes that according to these sources, the Sami believed that the stones, trees, lakes and the mountains had souls, and by offerings they could become alive and offer their help and support. Several gods were also worshiped, and the gods and their different worlds were drawn on the *noaidi*'s drum, *runebommen*. By the use of *rummebommen* and the traditional form of Sami song, the *joik*, the *noaidi* would reach a state of ecstasy and the *noaidi*'s soul would travel to the different worlds and talk with the gods (Hætta, 2002).

Marianne Giertsen writes that she does not know of any sources saying that the *noaidi* had queer gender expressions or sexualities, but that even if no known sources can prove that homosexuality has been institutionalized and legitimized in Sápmi, it does not mean that same-sex sexuality was not present in Sápmi (Giertsen, 2002: 14). The earliest sources on Sami religion are written by missionaries, and as Indigenous Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith emphasizes, indigenous history has often been written by outsiders, not allowing the indigenous insiders to define their own history (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). She also draws on the feminist post-structuralism, as she also remind us that history most often is “his-story”, and that indigenous history and early sources are written by men and therefore influenced by a Western patriarchal mindset (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 29). Chapter four will return to a discussion of how such mindsets can have influenced the missionaries behind these old sources.

There is a lack of old written sources that show that there has been room for queer Sami sexualities and gender expressions in Sápmi. Through email correspondence, I

have been in contact with the Sami artist Britta Marakatt-Labba, who at her artist talks often refers to an oral story, from Sami mythology, that she was told as a child. She writes the following:

As a child, I was told that all children are one-gendered, until we start to grow. My mother told me that sometimes the creator forgot to change the gender of a kid. So if a boy grew up to look like a woman, or the other way around, while the inside was screaming for something else, then the creator had only forgot to change what was supposed to be changed. So people with different sexualities have therefore always been the most natural thing in the world for me, as I was told what Sami mythology said about it.

- Britta Marakatt-Labba, Sami artist

The quotes of informants Mikke and Lemet point out that they believe there has been more openness for queer Sami before Christianity was introduced through the missionaries in Sápmi. The quote of the Sami artist Giert Rognli suggests the same, as he connects this openness to what he refers to as “the old culture”. Sami artist Britta Marakatt-Labba, who is not queer herself, is explaining her acceptance of queer sexualities and gender expression with Sami mythology. I find Lemet and Giert’s quotes particularly interesting, as they not only show that they believe queer Sami were accepted in Sápmi, but they also believe they were connected to the sacred sphere, that they were shamans. As Giertsen emphasizes, there are no written sources on such appearances in Sápmi, but there are numerous examples of shamans among other indigenous peoples with rather gender-fluid appearances. According to Giertsen, what she calls “transgender qualities” has often been the criteria for shamans in indigenous communities. She lists the Native American Navajo, the Lango in Uganda and the Mahu on Tahiti as examples (Almås and Pirelli Benestad in Giertsen, 2002: 14). Such appearances do not conform to the Western binary thinking with its heteronormative ideal, and as this binary thinking often has framed the research of Western anthropologists, such gender fluid shamans have often been described as gay men. One example of this is the anthropological term “berdache”. It were coined by Western anthropologists, and has therefore been recognized within the field of anthropology. The term originates in French and means “kept boy” or “male

prostitute”, and is therefore also highly offensive (Driskill, Heath Justice, Miranda, Tatonetti: 2011, 5). I will return to the discussion about berdache in the following.

As the quote of Lemet and Giert shows, they believe there have been similarities to this in Sápmi, that there have also been *noaidies* who did not conform to the Western heteronormative binary thinking on sexuality and gender. Stefan Mikaelsson too supports their believes. At our interview he said he had heard about similar appearances among indigenous people in the circumpolar area. When asked if he believed there have been similar appearances in Sápmi, he said: “Yes. I think it definitely has been. We’ve got so many similarities with the Arctic indigenous peoples around the circumpolar area, that I consider it unlikely if it was not found among the Sami”.

“I definitely feel like I am a user, or a carrier of two-spirits. But at the same time I don't feel like I have the right to take such a position, or to claim that I have such a gift. You can't just claim such a position for yourself; someone has to give it to you. To claim such a position for yourself would be the same as to write your own diploma that says you have a university education.”

-Stefan Mikaelsson

“ We, Queer Sami, should empower ourselves through going back to the history, to the world that had use for us, that had use for our special knowledge and special vision, the special side of the two-spirit people who... are the key to the future, who can see more. We should find that heritage somewhere there, the heritage that is buried under the Christianity, the long history of Christianity”

-Queer Sami from Finland

I first heard the term “two-spirit” or “two-spirited” during my fieldwork at Pride House in Oslo. At the panel discussion here, Elfrida Bergman, one of the women behind the Queering Sápmi project, said that they encountered this term several times while collecting queer Sami life stories for their book “Queering Sápmi – Sami stories beyond the norm”. When asked by someone in the audience to elaborate on the meaning of this term, she asked the queer major of the Sami Parliament in Sweden,

Stefan Mikaelsson to answer. I was not given permission to record this discussion, but as it became clear from the panel discussion that this was a term that Stefan Mikaelsson identified with, I asked him about what this terms meant for him the next day when we met for an interview. The quote above was his answer to this question. The second quote is from my fieldwork at the release of the Queering Sápmi book in Umeå and comes from a Finnish queer Sami who shared this in plenum at a workshop, where I was allowed to record.

The term “two-spirit” is does not originate in any of the Sami languages, nor any of the other Scandinavian languages, but is a term that has it roots in indigenous cultures on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. As a term, it was coined at the third annual spirit gathering of gay and lesbian Native American/First Nation people near Winnipeg, Canada in 1990. It origin is in the Northern Algonquin dialect, and is an English translation of *niizh manitoag*, two spirit, that indicated the presence of both a feminine and a masculine spirit in one person (Driskill, 2010: 72). The term aims to unite Native American/First Nation person who identify outside of the Western binary thinking of gender and sexuality, but it is also a rejection of the anthropological recognized term *berdache*. By coining this term to identify with, the two-spirits not only reject the white anthropologists’ term, but also take back the right to define oneself on one’s own conditions (Driskill, Heath Justice, Miranda, Tatonetti, 2011: 5). As the two-spirited Chippewa Cree Zachary Pullin writes, not only is the word offensive, it also falls short in defining the diverse experiences of Native people who weren’t of only male and female genders in their cultures.¹⁹ Zachary Pullin’s quote underlines an important aspect of two-spirit, namely the term as primarily centered on gender and not sexuality. Pullin also writes that while sexual orientation describes sexual relationships that one person of one gender has with another person, gender describes the expected roles within the community.²⁰ Qwo-Li Driskill also emphasize the focus on gender and states that two-spirit is primarily about gender roles and gender expression, and not about what genders a person can fall in love with or be sexually attracted to (Driskill, 2011: 102).

¹⁹ www.nativepeoples.com/Native-Peoples/May-June-2014/Two-Spirit-The-Story-of-a-Movement-Unfolds (03.11.2014)

²⁰ www.nativepeoples.com/Native-Peoples/May-June-2014/Two-Spirit-The-Story-of-a-Movement-Unfolds (03.11.2014)

For a Western mindset, framed and centered by a binary understanding of gender, this might be difficult to grasp. Judith Butler and her writings about gender performance can therefore be helpful in understanding the term two-spirit. From a Butlerian perspective, gender is acknowledged as socially constructed and as performed in line with expectation connected to gender roles. Western binary thinking acknowledge two genders, that of man and woman. The socially constructed roles of men and women are performed and understood in line with the specific expected behavior that is connected to these roles (Butler, 1990). There are, however, numerous examples of indigenous communities around the world that recognize, or have recognized, more than two social genders. These are indigenous understandings of gender that operate outside the binary understanding of gender, and include more than two gender roles. These roles are also connected to specific expected behavior, or in Butler's terms, expected gender performances. This is precisely what the two-spirit critique acknowledges.

The *fa'afafine* in Samoa is one example of an indigenous gender role outside the Western gender binary. A *fa'afafine* is a third gender role, and McMullin define it as a man who lives as a woman (McMullin in Diskril, Finley, Gilley and Morgenson, 2011: 85). This entails an expected gender performance in line with what is expected of a woman in the Samoa community. Marianne Giertsen writes that the Navajo traditionally recognized four different social genders, which entailed four different gender roles that were connected to specific expected gender performance and duties. Within the Western binary and heteronormative thought, these were women and men who married heterosexually and women and men who married same-sex persons. She also writes that Navajo who went through with same-sex marriage often were believed to have supernatural powers (Nanda in Giertsen, 2002: 14).

Two-spirit is, just like the term queer, both an umbrella-term and an identity in itself. Some two-spirits identify both with two-spirit and with tribally specific names, like the two-spirit Navajo activist referred to in the Winnipeg two-spirit health report from 2010, who refers to himself by the tribally specific term *n'dleeh* when he interacts with other Navajo and as two-spirit when interacting with other Natives that are not Navajo. When he interacts with non-Natives, he also uses Western terms and then he

refers to himself as gay (Winnipeg Final Report, 2010).

Two-spirit is also a movement, consisting of two-spirit individuals, activists, artists, scholars and their supporters. The movement both interacts and distances itself from the queer movement, where non-indigenous queers with white privileges are the majority. The two-spirit movement has its roots in the indigenous US and Canada population, but my findings show that queer Sami also identify with this movement. As the quotes above show, the Finnish queer Sami and Stefan Mikaelsson are both familiar with, and identify with this term, while Lemet and Gjert Rognli clearly identify with the intent of the term. Both queer Sami who use the term two-spirit hold central roles within Sami politics, which entails traveling and participation in international forums for indigenous people, which enables spreading such terms through meeting with other indigenous people who don't conform to the Western gender binary at these arenas. The queer Sami who don't participate in such forums in person still belong to the international imagined community of Indigenous people, and can identify with other queer indigenous people through it.

Imagined communities

The old Sami culture and their beliefs are very similar to those of Native American tribes. I have read that some Native Americans look at people that are bisexual, or people that are a bit different as... people who have a gift. They are more...what to say, open. They are resources in a way! So I believe it was quite similar among the Sami.”

-Chris

This quote shows how Chris, like Lemet, Giert and Stefan, also mirrors himself in cultural traits among other indigenous peoples. This should be seen in connection with their membership in the international indigenous imagined community. The term *imagined community* was coined by the American professor in political and historical science Benedict Anderson. He writes that the imagined communities were created by the invention of the book, which opened up for people to identify with and feel connections to other people whom they never meet, and might never meet in person. The connection and the membership to the community is based on a shared sense of

history that brings them together, or on sharing the same ethnicity or nationality, and the community is therefore imagined (Anderson, 1983). The international imagined indigenous community is based on the shared indigenous status of its members.

In the modern world of today, it is not only books that create platforms, for indigenous people to do like Chris: read about each other and mirror oneself in one another. Laurel Dyson writes that the indigenous participation and presence online have increased significantly since the early 90s, creating space for indigenous people to talk, share experiences and build networks through indigenous online forums. Laurel Dyson writes that the indigenous participation and presence online have increased significantly since the early 90's, creating spaces for indigenous people to talk, share experiences and build networks through indigenous online forums. (Dyson, 2011: 251). There has also been an increased growth in social arenas for indigenous peoples to meet face to face over the last decades, which is also strengthening the international imagined indigenous community. The creations of international platforms for indigenous politics that have found place over the last decades have also been important for the imagined community. Examples are WCIP (World Council of Indigenous Peoples) and WGIP (the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations) that by the end of the millennium involved 90 indigenous organizations from settler states, 40 organizations from Asia and 23 from Africa (Sissons, 2005: 22). Indigenous international platforms for cultural exchange, like the indigenous Riddu Riddu festival in Manndalen in Troms, Norway, where indigenous people can meet and share experiences, are also important as they strengthen the feeling of togetherness.

The international indigenous imagined community creates opportunities for indigenous people to mirror oneself in each other. This also enables indigenous individuals who don't confirm heteronormativity to mirror and feel connected to each other. The quote by Chris shows clear parallels to the two-spirit movement, even if he doesn't use this term himself. The same can be said about the other queer Sami voices in this chapter. This also opens up for questioning if queer Sami have been more visible in some areas before Norwegian values were introduced through the assimilation policies in Sápmi. As the quotes by the queer Sami voiced in this chapter show, it might not always have been as silent as it is today.

Summary

This chapter has shown the short outlines of both Sami and queer histories in Norway, histories that shows that both the Sami and the queer minority have fought to gain the rights they have today. It also shows the missionary work that has found place in Sápmi, and how the Sami has been exposed for assimilation policies from the Norwegian state. The queer Sami voiced in this chapter believe that the silence of queerness has not always been as present in Sápmi as it is today, and that queer Sami was more visible in before the missionaries arrived and the assimilation policies was enforced by the State on the Sami population in Norway. Some of the queer Sami in this chapter also say they believe they have had their roles to fill, that they have been shamans. Through mirroring in other indigenous people who reject the gender binary and don't confirm heteronormativity, like the two-spirit movement, queer Sami are enabled to (re-) claim these spaces in Sami history.

Chapter three: The silence

Introduction

Queer Sami have been invisible both inside and outside of Sápmi's borders. This chapter aims to investigate the silencing of queer Sami, with the main focus on the different aspects of the silence in Sápmi. I will start with a presentation of my fieldwork, and then move on to a discussion on the invisibility of queer Sami in the queer community in Norway. This will be followed by an investigation of the different aspects of the silence in Sápmi.

Fieldworks

Fieldwork at Luleå Pride

My fieldwork in Luleå found place in the period June 12–17, 2013. Luleå is a town situated on the Swedish side of Sápmi, in the county of Norrland, with 75 000 inhabitants²¹. Before travelling to Luleå I had been accepted as a volunteer at Luleå Pride, a rather new event, arranged for the second time that year. Pride is a celebration by and for queer people, where people with sexualities and identities that do not confirm the heteronormative ideal come together to celebrate and take pride in their queerness. Prides are celebrated internationally, in countries all over the world, and therefore serve to connect and empower queers on an international level. In Scandinavia, the Pride celebrations are hosted annually in the capital cities, and in recent years there has also been a growth of such celebration in smaller cities, such as Luleå.

When I arrived in Luleå, I did not know what to expect, but I was hoping that participating as a volunteer at a Pride celebration in the geographical Sápmi would enable me to meet or get in contact with queer Sami individuals. I had therefore high hopes for the Pride program, hoping that there would be workshops or discussions that could be relevant for my research. Before traveling to Luleå, I had been in contact with the girls behind the Queering Sápmi project through email correspondence, and

²¹ www.luleå.se (09.09.2014)

as it turned out that they also planned to come for the Pride, we agreed to meet and talk about their work. But just hours upon my arrival, I received an email from them, saying that they had to cancel their trip, leaving me with no safe appointments. I had posted a request for informants for my project on Luleå Prides Facebook page in advance of the trip that had brought no results, so I posted a new request. The Queering Sápmi girls also posted a request on their page. All I could do at this point was to wait for response, and hope that I would get in contact with potential informants through my work as a volunteer.

My brother came with me to Luleå, and he also volunteered. The coming days we socialized with other volunteers and participants, and thereby we got to talk to a lot of people about my project. However, it turned out to be very difficult to get in contact with queer Sami. I did not succeed in getting in touch with anyone before the very last day, when I met a friend of another volunteer who had seen my request on Facebook. This person gave me the contact information of a queer Sami girl that he knew, but when I contacted her, she turned out to be out of town for the weekend. I had to go home without succeeding in finding any informants; neither did I participate in any workshops or discussion relevant for my work, as queer Sami wasn't mentioned at any of the events that I took part in.

When returning home from fieldwork I first felt disappointed by the lack of findings. But later, I realized that not finding any informants or queer Sami representation at a Pride festival situated in the geographical Sápmi, is also a finding in itself, as it can point to queer Sami being invisible both in the queer environment and in the geographical Sápmi. However, queer Sami seem to have been more visible at Luleå Pride both the year before and after I did my fieldwork. When I met up with the Queering Sápmi girls at my fieldwork in Oslo a week later, they told me that they had presented their project at Luleå Pride the previous year, in 2012. Stefan Mikaelsson, the queer Sami Parliament mayor in Sweden, who also participated in the Queering Sápmi project, also told me when we met in Oslo that he participated this year. The result of the Queering Sápmi project was also presented at Luleå Pride in 2014. It should also be taken into account that the queer Sami representation would have been more visible at my fieldwork if it were not for the Queering Sápmi girls cancelling their trip.

Fieldwork at Pride House, Oslo

At my second fieldwork, at Pride House, there was a greater visibility of queer Sami. The fieldwork took place in Oslo, the main capital of Norway, June 21–23, 2013. Pride House is also a rather new event, arranged for the first time in 2011, on LLH OAs initiative. Pride House is arranged the weekend before Oslo Pride festival each year, and Litteraturhuset, which hosted Pride House this year, writes on their webpage “Pride House is Norway’s biggest arena for queer politics, and it represents the political gravitas during the Oslo Pride festival in Oslo.”²² Litteraturhuset is the biggest House of Literature in Europe, with five rooms suitable for workshops, panel discussions and debates.

Pride House had focus on queer Sami this year, something that was marked by the internationally recognized Sami artist Mari Boine performing at the opening show. Stefan Mikaelsson also held a speech at this opening, which he impulsively ended in a joik, the traditional form of Sami song. This was also Stefan Mikaelsson’s, who defines as a queer man, first public performance wearing a dress. Seeing him on stage performing an emotionally charged joik, wearing a pink and black dress and matching nail polish, while holding on to his little reindeer mascot, was a strong experience. Both Stefan and Mari Boine received standing applause from the audience.

Pride House had both a debate and a workshop with focus on the situation of the queer Sami. My position as an activist researcher opened up for involvement in this, and I worked close with the leader of Pride House, Ranveig Igraine Stava, in advance of planning the debate “What is the silence in Sápmi hiding? ”, a cooperation that I will come back to later in this chapter. The workshop was on the Queering Sápmi project, a presentation given by its leaders, Elfrida Bergman and Sara Lindquist, followed by a conversation about their work with the audience. There was a clear visibility of queer Sami at Pride House, but it was the invisibility and the silencing of queer Sami that were discussed at the debate. My position as an activist researcher also allowed me to lead this debate.

I was contacted by Ranveig at the preliminary stage of my research and was asked

²² www.litteraturhuset.no (07.11.2014)

whether I wanted to contribute with anything related to my research at Pride House. Ranveig is an old friend of mine and they knew about my work, but not where I was in the research process. I told Ranveig that I was still in the preliminary stage of my research and that I struggled with finding academic work on queer Sami, but also with finding information on queer Sami in general. We discussed this invisibility of queer Sami on the phone, and Ranveig became very engaged and asked if I could come to Oslo for a meeting.

The invisibility of queer Sami was something I started to reflect about quite early in my research process. This was first and foremost because of the little amount of information that I was able to find. In addition, I also discovered a recurrent theme in few online media articles that had a clear connection to the invisibility of queer Sami: the silence about queerness in Sámi communities. There was particularly one article that got my attention. In the spring 2013, just before I traveled to meet Ranveig in Oslo, Nordlys²³ wrote about a homosexual Sami man from the inland in Finnmark, Norway. He tells his story in this article, and it is a story about ostracism, insults and about his Sami friends that turned their back on him when he came out as gay in Kautokeino, Finnmark. Researcher Lenert Ketil Hansen, at the Centre for Sami Health Research at the University of Tromsø is interviewed in the same article. He participated in the work on a White Paper on Sami politics in 2008. It states, among other things, that “the question of homosexuality is comprised of taboo and has to a large extent been silenced in the Sami community”²⁴. This White Paper on Sami Politics of 2008 also resulted in the Ministry of Children and Equality seeing the need for a survey of the living conditions for lesbians and gays Sami, and the coming year the Fafo report on the lesbian and gays in Sápmi was released. The Fafo report says that it is striking how the queer Sami are invisible both among Sami and among queers, and it goes on to say: “invisibility is an effective suppression mechanism. If one does not even exist, it is difficult to fight injustice” (Grønningsæter og Nuland, 2009: 17).

At the meeting with Ranveig we discussed the article from Nordlys and this quote

²³ Newspaper for the counties Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, in the north of Norway

²⁴ www.nordlys.no/nyheter/article6537158.ece (09.11.2014)

from the Fafo report. As Pride House is such a central arena for queer politics in Norway, it is also a good arena to work for change, and breaking the silence here can therefore be beneficial in increasing visibility of queer Sami. Ranveig and I therefore started to work on the draft of what we were to discuss at the debate, and on putting together a panel for discussion.

The debate “Hva skjuler den samiske stillheten?” (in English: What is the silence in Sápmi hiding?) found place at Litteraturhuset in Oslo on June 22, 2013. The panel consisted of six debaters. Ranveig asked the debaters in advance to define for themselves from which positions they were talking from, to print it in the Pride House program, and it was as follows: Sven Henriksen, playwright, actor and homosexual, Hagbart Grønmo, advisor for the Norwegian Sami Parliament, Stefan Mikaelsson, the queer mayor of the Swedish Sami Parliament, Elfrida Bergman, one of the leaders of the Queering Sápmi project, Arne Backer Grønningsæter, Fafo-researcher, and Leammuid Lemet Ánde, a young queer Sami politician (NSR), and then myself, Ane Hedvig Heidrundsdotter Løvold, master student from UiT, as the meeting leader.

The silence was discussed at the debate, and it was all other than silent. The debaters, especially the queer Sami in the panel, were very engaged and the atmosphere in the room was emotionally charged. Two of the queer Sami debaters did in particular show a temper and a directness that was far from the picture often drawn of the silent and restrained Sami, and the representative from the Sami Parliament was grilled with questions, both from his fellow debaters and the audience.

Fieldwork at the Queering Sápmi release in Umeå

My third fieldwork found place at the Queering Sápmi release in Umeå, in Norrland county, Sweden, September 20–22, 2013. Queering Sápmi is a project that was started by the two Swedish queer girls Elfrida Bergman and Sara Lindquist in 2011. The girls have travelled around in Sweden, Norway and Finland to meet queer Sami and interviewed them about their experiences of being queer and Sami. Their work has resulted in a book with 31 queer Sami life stories, illustrated by Sara’s photography. The book release took place at Norrbotn Hotel, where they had invited all the participants in the book, their friends and family, Sami and queer activists and other

political allies and supporters. We were all gathered at the hotel for the weekend to take part in both social and political activities.

On Friday night there was an official opening of a photo exhibition with pictures from the project and some tasters from the texts in the book. Speeches were held and the Sami artist Lovisa Negga performed. Saturday was a workshop day. After breakfast we were all divided into small groups to discuss and map the needs of queer Sami. I was put in a group with other academics. Before lunch the group was put together with the group of Sami politicians and activists, to discuss our thoughts with them. After lunch we were put together with the group of queer activists and “nerds” to discuss and share our thoughts with them, too. Then finally, before dinner, all the groups, now four all in all, got together and presented their conclusions to each other. The night ended with “the first queer Sami dance in history”. Sami dance, or *samedans* in Swedish, is familiar to most Sami as the term for a get-together where Sami people come to dance and enjoy themselves.

The silence in the queer community

At the debate at Pride House, the silence was broken in the queer community in Norway. Even if it was mainly the silence in Sápmi that was discussed, the invisibility of queer Sami has also been striking in the queer community. After my meeting with Ranveig in the shared locations of Pride House, LLH and Skeiv Ungdom in Oslo center, I met a profiled person in Norwegian queer politics in the lunchroom. We started to talk about my research, and they said the following; “I have never understood why it is so difficult to be Sami”.

In Chapter 2, I presented a short outline of queer and Sami history in Norway, and how both queers and Sami in Norway are historically oppressed minority groups. The oppression of queers and Sami in Norway has been historically regulated through criminalization of homosexuality and assimilation policies towards the Sami. These laws and policies have been repealed, but the structures caused by them do not disappear over night. Queers and Sami are still oppressed by the structures, something that is visible through sanctions imparted by the majority, like stigmatization of the minority identity. Arnfinn J. Andersen draws on Monro and Plummer as he writes; “even if the political elite should wish to make changes in the legislation in favor of

the interest of a minority group, the changes are not valid if they are not perceived as legitimated by the majority of citizens. The opportunities of the citizens are therefore not equal, and minorities who challenge central norms and values, often experience that their interests are pushed aside” (Monro and Plummer in Andersen, 2009: 124).

As historically oppressed groups, both Sami and queers are what Chilisa refers to as structurally oppressed groups today. By using this term, Chilisa underlines that the structures that historically operated as oppressing still do (Chilisa, 2012). These structures are visible through queers and Sami receiving sanctions for challenging the central norms and values of the majority. Norwegian queers are protected by an anti-discrimination law, but still receive sanctions for challenging central norms and values connected to heteronormativity. The Norwegian media can too often report about hate-crime against queers, and “gay” is still the most common insulting word used in Norwegian schoolyards today.²⁵ The assimilation policies of Sami are repealed, but a White Paper from the Norwegian Storting on Sami politics in 2008 could report that one out of four Sami have experienced discrimination because they are Sami. It goes on to stating that “the legacy of the Norwegianisation policy still lingers in people’s attitudes to a great extent, although public policy is revised. It is therefore important to focus on issues related to discrimination against the Sami, both personal and structural” (Stortingsmelding nr. 28, 2007-2008).²⁶ It is important that the queer movement is aware of the Sami history and the structures that still operate to oppress Sami as a minority group. The quote of the profiled person in queer politics points at a lack of awareness of the intersectional position of queer Sami, in the queer movement and the queer political discourse. The lack of such awareness can also serve as an explanation to the invisibility of queer Sami in the queer movement.

Intersectionality is a term coined in 1989 by the American law professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in her analysis of the invisibility of colored women in the American legal system that structurally favors the privileged categories white, male, heterosexual, Christian and wealthy (Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad, 2010). The intersectional critique has, however, roots back to the field of black feminism and the

²⁵ www.skeivungdom.no (23.11.2014)

²⁶ www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/asd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2007-2008/stmeld-nr-28-2007-2008-/5/1.html?id=512866 (07.11.2014)

end of the 1970s growing criticism towards white feminists tendencies to emanate from an unspoken, but specific white perspective (Carbin in Ledman, 2012). bell hooks is a central name from the black feminism's intersectional critique, and her book *Ain't I a Woman?*, published in 1981, criticizes the Western feminism for excluding race as a meaningful category in analyzing and criticizing gender oppression (McClintock in Ledman, 2012). hooks argues that, by excluding race as a category, white feminists also exclude black women. Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad write that intersectionality is an analytical term that centers on the crossroad where different roads of oppression meet (Berg, Flemmen and Gullikstad, 2010). When applying this on hooks' argument, hooks ask white feminists to acknowledge that oppression of black and white women take different forms, as not only patriarchy road, but also racism street cross in the intersectional crossroad of black women. The intersectional perspective also points out the white privilege of white women, and also that the lack of acknowledgement by white women emanates from an unspoken, white perspective, and in reality is silencing the black female voices (hooks, 1989).

The silence of queer Sami in the queer community and queer political discourse, can also be understood from the intersectional perspective and bears similarities with bell hooks' critique of the feminist movement. The Norwegian queer movement tends to emanate from an unspoken, Norwegian perspective. Emanating from a Norwegian perspective can result in queers of other ethnic backgrounds becoming invisible and silenced in the queer political discourse. The need of an inclusive queer political discourse that acknowledges the intersectional position of queers with other ethnic backgrounds has been debated and pointed out by the organization Skeiv Verden.

Skeiv Verden (Queer World) is an organization with a political agenda and platform, which also arrange social events and get-togethers for queers with ethnic minority backgrounds. The work of the political activists from Skeiv Verden has resulted in an increased focus on the intersectional position of queers with ethnic minority backgrounds in the recent years, both in the queer political discourse, but also in the Norwegian media and society in general. Skeiv Verden's important work has so far, however, not involved queer Sami. The leader of Skeiv Verden, Susanne Demou Øvergaard, said at a panel discussion that she participated in at Pride House 2014, that the main focus of their work is on queers with immigrant background, with a

particular focus on queer asylum seekers. After Øvergaard some months later visited Finnmark Pride, in autumn 2014, she said in an interview with *Blikk* that queer Sami have much in common with the groups that she works with²⁷. I contacted Øvergaard and asked her to elaborate on this, and in our email correspondence she stated that the similarities between queer Sami and the groups that she works with lies in having different ethnic and cultural backgrounds from the majority of queers in Norway, and queer Sami can therefore also face other challenges than Norwegian queers.

The voices in the margin

The discussion so far has revolved around the silence held by the queers who are not Sami, but do the queer Sami communicate their Sami identity themselves in the queer community or in queer setting? Or are queer Sami silent about their Sami identity in queer settings too?

The only academic article on queer Sami I've found, Marianne Giertsen's "En minoritet i minoriteten – homofile i samiske miljø og samer i det homofile miljø" (A minority within the minority – gay in the Sami environment and Sami in the gay environment) deals with the three choices that gay Sami individuals have when approaching gay or Sami environments. Giertsen draws on Giddens and Goffman's definitions of minority groups and stigma. Giddens defines minority groups as a group of people who share the experience of being discriminated, which results in a feeling of community and of belonging together (Giddens in Giertsen, 2002: 12). Members of minority groups risk being exposed for stigma by others. Goffman defines stigma as what happens when a person's characteristics makes other people discredit that person for it (Goffman in Giertsen, 2002: 12). Giertsen writes that gay Sami risk meeting stigma both in what she refers to as "the Sami environments" and in "the gay environments", and Giertsen presents three options to avoid this.

The first option is located in the gay environment. When socializing here, undercommunicating of the Sami identity and communicating only the gay identity will prevent stigmatization. The second option is located in the Sami environment. Here the choice lies in emphasizing and only communicating the Sami identity. The third

²⁷ www.blikk.no/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=11739:fra-festivaltil-festival&Itemid=164 (23.11.2014)

option is to communicate both of these identities when socializing in the Sami and gay environments, but Giertsen also warns that this will increase the risk of being stigmatized (Giertsen, 2002). Giertsen assumes that the gay Sami individuals will meet more stigmatization for being gay in Sami environments than for being Sami in gay environments. She has not done any interviews or research on this herself, but writes that this is based on different sociological theories and her own experience of being a lesbian (Norwegian) woman, living in Sápmi. She supports this assumption by quoting an American study saying “Black, Jews and Hispanics are not thrown out of their families or religion at adolescence for being black, Jewish or Hispanics. Homosexual adolescents are” (Benum in Giertsen, 2002: 17). As I read this, Giertsen is saying that one will not be thrown out from gay environment for being Sami, but one risk being thrown out of the family or being disowned by Sami environments for being homosexual.

Of my eight informants, none of them chose Giertsen’s option number one. Option number two will be discussed later in this chapter. It varies to which degree my informants participate in the queer community, but when socializing with other queers, none of the interviews with my informants show that they hold back on communication of their Sami identity. They all seem to choose Giertsen’s option number three, not under-communicating their Sami identity. But as queer theorist Judith Butler writes, deviants from the norms risk to be sanctioned (Butler, 1990), and in a queer environment where being Norwegian is the norm, queer Sami risk to be sanctioned with stigmatization. There is, however, only one of my informants whose story tells about stigmatization in the queer community. This is informant Lemet, who says: “I sort of always have to explain who I am in the queer environment”, and that other queers confront him with questions like, “Ooooh, are you Sami? Do you speak Sami? Do you have reindeers?” Questions like this do, however, not prevent Lemet from communicating who he is, but it makes him feel like an outsider, both in Sápmi and in the queer community. He says: “In Finnmark, I’m not fully accepted because I am queer, and in the queer community it can feel like it is the other way around. I am not truly home in any of the two places”. By this quote, Lemet confirms Giertsen’s theory saying that queer Sami also risk being stigmatized in the queer community. This is also in line with Butlers thoughts on sanctions, as being Sami does not confirm the Norwegian norm in the queer community, and can therefore lead to queer Sami

individuals feeling excluded, or in Lemet's words "not being truly home".

Lemet's story also has clear parallels to the writings of bell hooks, who locates minorities in the margin, in opposition to the majority in the privileged center. bell hooks focuses on the power that lies in the margin. The margin is a place of refusal, it is from where one can stand up and say "no" to the colonizer, and "no" to the suppressor (hooks, 1989: 207). It is also a place from where hooks encourages minorities to say no to being forced to play the role of the "Exotic Other" by the majority in the center (hooks, 1989: 205). By being forced into the role of the "Exotic Other", the majority is "othering" the minority because of their difference, and by doing this, excluding them from the center. Norwegian queers are located in the margin, in opposition to the heteronormative center. Queer Sami are located in the margin of the margin, where Norwegian queers are located in the center. But not all of my informants see the need to say no to the role of the "Exotic Other" in the queer community, and two of my informants actually talked about this role as something positive, something that gave them positive attention. Both Andreas and Mikke told stories about how they had experienced to be seen as "exotic", a word they both used, by queers when they had communicated their Sami identity. Andreas also went to a gay bar in Oslo, dressed in his *guakti*, the traditional national dress for Sami men, and says he only got positive attention and comments for his visibility as Sami.

The silence in Sápmi

At our interviews, my informants have been generally more concerned about their experiences of being in the margin in Sápmi, than in the queer community. In what follows I will look into different aspects of the silence in Sápmi, both in the center and in the margin. Through my fieldwork and interviews I have found two main aspects of the silence in the center, where Sami who confirm heteronormativity are located. The first aspect concerns the expectation of not being confrontational in Sápmi; the second aspect is the silence as a sanction that mediates non-acceptance and ostracism from the center. My findings also show the presence of silence in the center, where the queer Sami are located. Below I will also look into the different aspects of the silence that is located here.

A silent people

“The Sami people are a very silent people. They communicate with a lot of subtext and codes; they are not a very direct people. I have lost carrier opportunities, because I am a very direct person, myself. I take the liberty to slam the door, and you are not supposed to do that in Sápmi when you feel that something is wrong. I let people know if there is something I don't like, and you are not supposed to that either in Sápmi. And you should never say something directly to the person it considers.”

-Sven

You don't want to be “in your face” to other people in a way that is confrontational. It does not lie in our culture to be confrontational; that's at least how I have been raised. It would have been confrontational if I flagged with the rainbow-flag from the porch, and stuff like that.

-Anna

Well, it's not only a question about this [queerness]. The silence is a cultural trait, which I believe comes from the process of norwegianisation. From early on, through many years of norwegianisation, you were not supposed to think our talk about everything, rather just silence questions to their death, you know, so they disappeared. You were not supposed to talk about that you were a Sami. That was the mechanism of the norwegianisation process.

-Andreas

What these quotes from the interviews with informants Sven, Anna and Andreas have in common is that they all indicate an aspect of the silence of queerness in the center in Sápmi; that not being confrontational is a norm in Sápmi.

Sven describes the Sami as a very silent and non-confrontational people, but this is far from descriptive for Sven as a person. Sven, who is a professional actor and playwright, is also a very active social commentator and through his blog he is highly confrontational about both personal and political issues that concerns him. This confrontational side of his personality is, however, something he has experienced to

be sanctioned in Sápmi. The leading queer theorist Judith Butler understands sanctions as what is given to individuals who do not conform to the ruling norms, and sanctions can therefore serve to point out these norms (Butler, 1990). When Sven is sanctioned, in terms of losing carrier opportunities, for being confrontational, this confirms in a Butlerian understanding that not being confrontational is a norm in Sápmi.

The expectation to not be confrontational seems to be an aspect of the silence in the center in Sápmi, but also in the margin. Anna's quote shows that she is careful about communicating her queerness in Sápmi, and to be "in your face" about it to other Sami. Several of my informants also talk about how other issues, like sickness and problems in the close family, are not talked about to others. Like informant Chris says: "if someone in the family is sick, it is only talked about within the closest of the closest of family". Andreas understands this silence as a cultural trait. As he sees it, the roots of the silence lies in structures of the norwegianisation policies, structures that forced the Sami to silence and under-communicate their difference. The arguments of Andreas have clear lines to Harald Eidheim's study from the 1960's in a small fjord area West in Finnmark. Eidheim observed how Sami tended to under-communicate the Sami identity, for instance by talking in Norwegian and not Sami to each other when there were Norwegians near by, in order to avoid sanctions and stigma (Eidheim, 1969).

As Andreas believes the silence has its roots in the structures of the norwegianisation policies, he says that the silence does not necessarily mean that the non-queer Sami do not accept the queer Sami. He says that it is not necessarily only about homosexuality being such a huge problem in Sápmi, but about not taking the bigger debate about these structures. But on the other hand, Andreas admits that he "meets himself in the door a bit on that one". This is a Norwegian saying that means to be confronted by one's own contradictory opinions. I met up with Andreas just a few days before the panel discussion at Pride House, and he was well prepared to discuss the silence with me, as he had read about the debate in the media. When I asked him if he planned to come for the debate, he said that he wouldn't, in fear of being recognized as "the gay Sami" by other Sami attending, a fear that made him "meet himself in the door". Because of his profession, Andreas often appears in Sami media. Andreas expressed

his fear of communication of his queerness in public arenas like Pride House, as the media then might start to ask him to comment on issues related to queer Sami. As he put it himself: “I would much rather be recognized as a professional Sami than a professional homosexual. Andreas would rather, in bell hooks terms, be recognized as a professional located in the center in Sápmi, than in the margin. bell hooks encourages minorities to speak up from the margin, but Andreas also admitted that if he would change his mind and come to the debate at Pride House, he would not dare speak up in public. Andrea’s fear of speaking up from the margin should be seen in connection with the silence in the center. If the silence in the center in Sápmi only mediates acceptance of homosexuality and queerness, then Andreas would not risk anything by attending or raising his voice at Pride House.

The silence as a sanction

***“In Norwegian you have this saying that goes “the one who is silent agrees”. In Sápmi it’s the other way around”
-Sami classmate***

This quote comes from a non-queer Sami classmate when discussing my research and the silence in Sápmi in class. Seen from this perspective, the silence can be seen as a form of resistance, a way to show non-acceptance. This way of understanding the silence is in line with Stefan Mikaelsson experiences with the silence from the center. At the debate at Pride House, he expressed that he experienced the silence he was met with by the non-queer Sami as a way of not showing their acceptance. At our interview, he talked more about his experiences of his queerness being silenced by other Sami, especially by other Sami men. As he said, “only some very few men have commented it, but the Sami women more often express that they like it”. Stefan’s queerness is often very visible through, in Judith Butlers terms, the way he is doing his gender (Butler: 1990). Stefan, who identifies as a queer heterosexual man, does not dress in accordance with what is expected by a Sami man. She has attended Sami Parliamentary Sessions and other public platforms for Sami politics, wearing what he calls “feminine attributes” to his *guakti*. *Guakti* is the Sami national dress, and the Sami men are expected to wear pants to the *guakti*, preferably made of reindeer skin. Stefan Mikaelsson wears stockings, and he paints his nails with nail polish. With his

gender appearance, Stefan is challenging the Sami man's role, a role that he is experiencing as "too tight", with too little room for "feminine expression". Gender expressions that do not confirm the expectations connected to the gender binary, are challenging heteronormativity, and Stefan is sanctioned for it with silence from the center, something that also points out the ruling position of heteronormativity in Sápmi.

Silence is also a way for the center to maintain its power relation to the margin. bell hooks, shares the intersectional position of queer Sami, as she writes from the position of a black woman. hooks writes that "everywhere we go there is pressure to silence our voices, to co-opt and undermine them" (hooks, 1989: 205-6). The silence in the center in Sápmi can also undermine the queer Sami voices. Silence contributes to homosexuality not being articulated (Rosenberg, 2002: 118). The Fafo report states that the silence can result in the queer Sami lacking the words they need to describe their feelings and to articulate and understand who they are (Grønningsæter and Nuland, 2009: 17). For an individual who lacks the words to acknowledge one's queerness, the process of acknowledging it and of coming out of the closet can also take more time than for those who have the vocabulary for it. Queer theorists Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about the invention of the closet in her book "The Epistemology of the Closet". According to Sedgwick, it is mandatory for every homosexual to come out from the closet, and this is due to the power relation between the homosexual margin and the heterosexual center. Through the silence and ignorance in the center, the closet maintains its mandatory position, as silence and ignorance is the most efficient weapon to keep the heterosexual cultural domination stable (Sedgwick in Rosenberg, 2002: 96). Queer theorist Tiina Rosenberg comments on Sedgwick's work, and writes that "to see the silence as openness is preposterous, as the silence simply expresses lack of will and ability to take a nuanced discussion about sexuality" (Rosenberg, 2002: 96). Several of my informants talked about coming out of the closet, and the position of the closet is also mandatory in Sápmi. The existence of the closet is supported by the silence in the center, and can prevent queer Sami from coming out from it. For the queer Sami who are out of the closet, the silence can be experienced as a sanction, which mediates non-acceptance, exclusion and ostracism. As the Fafo report also states, the exclusion is often indirectly mediated through the silence (Grønningsæter and Nuland, 2009: 74).

The silence in the margin

We need more queer Sami who dare to be open about who they are. They need to dare more. I know about many, many gay Sami. The kind that comes crawling up to you and confides on your arm at 2am and says “Yes, now listen...” and I’m just like “You don’t have to say anything, I know”, and then they answer “Oh, I wish I could come out too”. Then I say; “Yes, I understand it is difficult. You are married, you have kids and a house and....”. Well, it’s not that easy for some people. We who don’t have it like that are blessed. We are very lucky. I don’t think we really understand how difficult it can be for some people.

-Sven

The silence is not only located in the center in Sápmi, but also in the margin. As Sven says, he knows about many gay Sami who are completely silent about their queerness, who are still in the closet. All of my informants are out of the closet, but some are more careful about communicating their queerness in Sápmi. The previous discussion on the silence in the queer community showed that none of my informants under-communicate their Sami identity in queer environments. In the Sami environments however, the stories of my informants show that they more often choose the second of Giertsen’s three options in avoiding stigma, and under-communicate their queer identities. The case of Andreas, who’s been to a gay bar in Oslo in his *guakti*, but who avoids participating at Pride House in fear of being recognized by other Sami exemplify this. Some of my informants, like Andreas, say that they don’t spend much time in the queer environments. As he puts it himself, he doesn’t hang out much in queer environments, but he hangs out with some of his gay friends every now and then. It looks like Andreas shares this view with several of my informants, as only two out of eight emphasize that they spend time in queer environments, and these two referred to the queer communities in Oslo and Tromsø. While the Sami identity connects the queer Sami to their families, ancestors and cultural heritage, the queer identity connects them to friends, partners and lovers. Different risks are therefore at stake when the queer Sami communicate their queerness in Sápmi than when they communicate Sami identity in queer environments, something that should be taken into account when discussing the silence in the margin. Through stigmatization or sanctions from their families, and in the worst by case being disowned, something one

of my informants experienced when coming out to them, the risk is also there to lose the connection to their culture.

The silence in the margin in Sápmi can be seen in connection with the expectation not to be confrontational, but it should first and foremost be seen in connection with the sanctions that the queer Sami risk to receive when they confront the center with their queerness. At the discussion at Pride House, one of the queer Sami in the panel, Lemet, gave several examples of sanctions given to him and other queer Sami for communicating their queerness. Lemet's stories were not much about being sanctioned through and with silence, but about sanctions in more physical and verbal forms. He told us about queer Sami who have been both physically and verbally insulted by non-queer Sami who have power positions in Sápmi; he also shared his own experiences. In the interview I did with him for Gaysir.no he tells that he was the first openly gay in his village, Karasjok in inner Finnmark, and that he has been sanctioned for being open there on a daily level. He says: "In Karasjok, I have been spat at, poured coffee, beer and drinks on, and I have received verbal abuse and death threats". As a result of all the sanction he had to move to Oslo. "In many ways, I feel like I had to move to Oslo to seek asylum".

The sanctions that queer Sami risk receiving from the center, both through silence and in more physical and verbal forms, should be seen in connection with the silence in the margin. This applies both to queer Sami who chose to under-communicate their silence, and for those who are completely silent, those who are still in the closet. Sven says he knows about many gay Sami who are still in the closet. A great number of the queer Sami who tell their stories in the *Queering Sápmi* book, 10 out of 31, are also anonymous and some of them still in the closet, something that points out how many queer Sami are completely silent about their queerness. As Sven's quote shows, there is a need for more open queer Sami who dare to speak up from the margin. This was also a need addressed by several of my informants, and also a central concern that was discussed at the *Queering Sápmi* release in Umeå. The queer Sami who dare to speak up from the margin are important role models for those who don't, as this can help the silent ones to also break the silence.

Another black feminist who writes from the margin is the poet Audre Lorde. She

writes from the intersectional position as black queer women, asking those in the margin to dare to speak up, to dare to communicate who they are. She is asking the margin to transform the silence into language and action. She writes that, in the case of silence, each of us draws a face of her own fear, -fear of contempt, of censure, of some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the visibility without which we cannot truly live (Lorde in Ryan, 2001: 82). She is asking the silent ones to dare to be visible with the difference, and she writes that we can sit in our safe corners, mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid. The visibility is what makes us most vulnerable, but it is also the source of our greatest strength (Lorde in Ryan, 2001: 82).

Summary

This chapter has shown that the silence is present both in the queer community and in Sápmi. However, the silence seems to be much more present in the margin in Sápmi than in the queer community. There are several aspects of the silence in Sápmi. It can be seen as a cultural trait, a trait which one of my informants in particular see and underlines as enforced and as a result of the norwegianisation policies. Not being confrontational in Sápmi seems to be a expectation, and there are also other topics one are not supposed to concern others with, like sickness. However, this also points to that queerness is something to be confrontational about. The silence from the center in Sápmi mediates non-acceptance and ostracism, and should therefore also be seen as a sanction in itself. There are also stories about more physical, verbal and violent sanctions that queer Sami has received for being queer, something that also points out the central position of heteronormativity in Sápmi.

Chapter four: Breaking the Silence

Introduction

This chapter will look into what was revealed when the queer Sami broke the silence. The previous chapter pointed out the central position of heteronormativity in Sápmi, and through the queer Sami who broke the silence at my fieldworks and interviews, two ideals that in particular are supported by heteronormativity has been revealed. This is the masculine ideal for Sami men and the Christian/læstadian ideal, and this chapter will look into this. The chapter will also look into and explore three strategies used by queer Sami in breaking the silence and gaining more visibility in Sápmi.

Heteronormativity in Sápmi

Queer theorist Tiina Rosenberg writes that norms are unspoken and invisible until someone breaks them (Rosenberg, 2002: 101). Through studying the silence, and the more physical and verbal forms of sanctions that queer Sami receive from the center, the previous chapter revealed the central position of heteronormativity in Sápmi. Heteronormativity is the perception that heterosexuality is normal (Rosenberg, 2002), and as heteronormativity operates within a binary understanding of gender, it is also regulative for norms connected to gender. For instance, if a cis-man²⁸ dresses in a way that is seen by his surroundings as feminine, he risks being sanctioned for not confirming the heteronormative expectation.

Heteronormativity intersects with other systems of norms and is connected to ideals. Queer theorist Tiina Rosenberg writes that ideals are created by the intersection of different norm systems, and are therefore reflections of what society perceives as normal. By confirming the norms connected to the ideal, the individuals are perceived as normal by society. As the individual risks being sanctioned for not confirming the

²⁸ The term cisgender was introduced as a way to refer to those who are not transgender without resorting to words like "biological" or "regular" (Marinucci, 2010: 125).

norms or ideal that are made up by others than the individual, Rosenberg also underlines that normality is a question of power (Rosenberg, 2002), and this power is most often located in the center (hooks, 1989).

My informants have been concerned about two ideals in particular: the masculine ideal for Sami men and the Christian/læstadian ideal. Heteronormativity seems to be a central norm that is connected to these two ideals, and the silence and the physical and verbal sanctions that queer Sami receive from the center must therefore also be seen in connection with the queer Sami not confirming these ideals.

The masculine ideal

There is this old expectation that you should be a man of nature, you know. That you should spend a lot of time outside, preferably have reindeer and be out on the tundra, herding them. And you should also be a macho man who doesn't relate to his feelings.

-Andreas

This is Andreas' description of the ideal Sami man, or the stereotype, as he refers to it. The norms connected to Andreas' description of this ideal, that is, to be a man of nature, to have reindeers, be macho and not relate to feelings, point at two aspects of this ideal. Firstly, the Sami man is expected to perform his gender in a way that is seen as masculine in Sápmi, and, secondly, this masculine ideal seems to be connected to reindeer herding. When Andreas talks about this ideal he says that he doesn't let it affect him much, "I don't care that much about it", he says. But at a later point in our interview, he also starts talking about how he is conscious about not dressing or appearing too feminine in Sami settings, and he says: "I am putting prestige into the fact that no-one can see that I am gay from my appearance."

Mikke, who did not identify with the gender assigned to him at birth, had just been through the last surgery in his gender-correcting process when we met up for our interview. His process of transitioning from female to male did not only involve the transition of gender, but also his ethnicity. It is only a few years ago that Mikke

discovered that he had Sami ancestors, and that some of his family members still also speak Sami. The generations before him experienced stigmatization and shame connected to the Sami identity, and his parents therefore raised him as Norwegian. When Mikke were to change his first name, he therefore also decided to change his last name into the family last name of Sami origin, and by doing so also reclaiming his Sami identity. He also signed up for a Sami language course. He says “When I first were to start all over, I was r-e-a-l-l-y going to start all over. And I actually feel like a better man as a Sami man.” Mikke’s description of the Sami man has many similarities to the one by Andreas, but while Andreas expresses that he does not care about this ideal, Mikke is idealizing it.

Mikke: A Sami man is strong and steady and he has a lot of wisdom. He knows a lot about his family and the traditions, and he is very clear about how stuff is supposed to be, he knows that stuff should be like this or that.

AH: But is he more masculine than the Norwegian man?

Mikke: Yes! He has rough working hands, and he is calm and takes life with devastating peace, because he has full control of everything, actually. And when I see a typical Norwegian working man, he is stressed and very ... well, he is not present in his own head at times. I'm more like the Sami man. I think you are much more self-restrained and in control as a Sami man. I think you can handle many things at once as a Sami man, and then of course, I think about the reindeer herders. A reindeer herding Sami, a man that herds reindeer, has to keep control over many reindeer at once, and no matter how stressed the reindeer might be, you know, they still manage it, and...it even looks easy! And then, if you throw in a Norwegian man into that, and he is supposed to do just half of the job, he will get stressed and he won't know where to start and stuff like that. And I think it is like in regards of farmers, and in more common working places too, that a Sami man is stronger and steadier, a guy with full control! And then, the Norwegian man, I know a couple of Norwegian men like that, who are a bit too stressed; they don't manage to get control of the things happening around them and it is just too much

stress. They stress too much! There is no point in stressing. Just take it easy! It's going to be okay. It's a bit like that, I think. That's how I see it.

-Mikke

Mikke's ideal of the Sami man is also connected to masculine norms. He also connects these norms and the expected masculine performance of the Sami man to qualities needed within the reindeer husbandry. The ideal of the masculine man is put in a binary opposition to the Norwegian man, and through ascribing the ideal of the Sami man masculine qualities, like being self-restrained and always in control, the ideal of the Norwegian man is feminized and therefore also confirms the ideal of the masculine Sami man.

When the queer Sami break the silence, who dares to break it and not reveals the invisibility of queer Sami men, especially in the areas that are connected to reindeer heading, like Karasjok and Kautokeino. Andreas, who is from a sea-Sami area, says that he would think twice before telling someone that he is gay if he travels to Karasjok and Kautokeino. He says: "To put it like that, I don't know of any gay men in Kautokeino." In the area that he is from, however, he says it is "popping up gays everywhere these days."

Two of my male informants are from the inland, Chris who defines himself as pansexual transsexual and Lemet who defines himself as gay or queer. Chris challenges most of the norms connected to gender and sexuality in Sápmi, as he has defined himself as both a heterosexual, bisexual and lesbian girl, and when we meet up for our interview he had just had his first meeting with Rikshospitalet to get sex-correcting surgery. But Chris had already moved out of the village he was from when he started his travel through his different sexuality and gender identities. In a documentary that is recently made about Chris he stated that his family in the south had been most supportive²⁹. In our interview he said that at least his family in Finnmark had not disowned him. Lemet, who has lived in Karasjok as openly gay, has, as Chapter 3 shows, experienced many sanctions for it. As the first open gay in his village, he felt he had to move to Oslo to seek "asylum" because of all the

²⁹ www.altaposten.no/lokalt/Nett-tv/article10184231.ece (01.12.2014)

sanctions. By being open about his homosexual orientation, but also by doing his gender in a very feminine way, he does not confirm the masculine ideal described by Andreas and Mikke, and he is therefore sanctioned for it. The lack of openly queer men in inner Finnmark can therefore be explained by the fear of the sanctions one risks to get by doing their gender performance in a way that is seen as feminine. Lemet also relates this to the reindeer husbandry.

I think it is especially difficult to come out for Sami within the reindeer husbandry, where you have to prove physical strength to be seen as masculine. If you are feminine or gay in such an environment, you are easily seen as weak.

-Lemet

Lemet also says that in Kautokeino there are a lot of lesbians but no gay men, something that also can be explained by this masculine ideal. A gay or queer man's gender performance can be seen as feminine, while a woman with a lesbian masculine performance seems to be more accepted. Informant Anna is born and raised in Kautokeino, and I have been in contact with three other lesbians from this area who are born or who live there. One of them replied my email by questioning the value of her participation in my research, as she did not find it difficult at all to live openly as a lesbian in Kautokeino.

The Christian/læstadian ideal

Another system of norms that support the ruling position of heteronormativity in Sápmi is connected to Christianity, and læstadianism in particular. Three of my informants talked about breaking the norms connected to the læstadian faith, and being sanctioned for it.

Sven says he “grew up with parents who were læstadian, and his dad also was a leading figure in Jehovah witnesses”. When Sven came out as gay in the early 80s, he was not only sanctioned with their non-acceptance, but his dad, described by Sven as a man who because of his religious view had a very fundamentalist views on sexuality, also threatened to send him to a clinic in the US to have him “corrected”. Sven says that he had to acknowledge that “that man was dangerous for me”, and he

had therefore moved to Oslo at the age of 16 to be able to live as he is.

Anna does not tell about any sanctions in verbal or physical forms, but she has been sanctioned through silence for being gay by her family, which she also explains with norms connected to Christian values, and læstadian in particular. Just like Sven, she felt that she had to move away from her family in the geographical Sápmi to be able to live openly as gay in the south. The first years after she came out, she had little contact with her family, but over the last years, the contact has increased and she now travels more often to the north to see them. She is also bringing her wife with her. She expresses that social settings with a Christian framing are the most challenging setting for her to be in, for instance church weddings. By being present at such settings with her wife she often feels uncomfortable, especially if they both wear *guakti*. She says that “I feel like I am too confrontational”, something that is not “in the Sami culture”, as Anna states in the quote in Chapter 3. The parties after the weddings can also be uncomfortable for her and the wife, as they get confronted by the silence of those who don't accept them, in terms of people who don't shake their hands, like one is supposed to do at Sami weddings. After years without much contact with her family, Anna took a spontaneous road trip with her wife to the north to visit her family. She was very nervous to meet her læstadian grandparents again, whom she had not seen for years or spoken much too after she came out. She was surprised by how warmly she was welcomed. Most læstadians have conservative views on sexuality, and sexual relationships are limited to men and women after marriage. In some areas in Sápmi, the gender roles are also set in terms of specific codes of dressing and chores for men and women. The strategy used by Anna's grandparents to cope with her lesbian sexuality was simply to refer to her wife as “he” and give her chores meant for men, for instance mowing the lawn.

Mikke has also experienced sanctions from close family members, which he connects to læstadian values. His family has been supportive in his transition, as he now lives as a heterosexual man. But before he transitioned he did not experience the same support. As a lesbian girl he was sanctioned with periods that he experienced as exclusion from his family, and by family members he was verbally sanctioned by sentences that started with “the Bible says”. Mikke connects the sanctions he received as a lesbian girl to the læstadian faith of his family members. His

experiences of being sanctioned for not living up to the expectations and norms connected to the læstadian faith have affected him so much that he has tattooed Jesus on his arm. The tattoo is of Jesus's face, suffering in pain. But when he twists his arm, the other side of his face looks humble. It is symbolizing both the pain and the spiritual refuge that Christianity has brought Mikke, but it is the suffering side of Jesus's face that is most visible and Mikke expresses anger for the sanctions he were given by his family back when he was a lesbian girl. He recently went on a excursion with his family to Marthajevri in Karesuando to visit Læstadius old house, where he got upset and angry about the joy they expressed about being in the same rooms as he once had been present. "I don't understand why they want to show off his house to others like that", he says. For Mikke it was not a joyful experience to be there, as he was reminded of the pain. As he said: "It felt like they were proud to have had him there. Oh, this is Lars Levi Læstadius house, one of those who brought the pain on us, come have a look!".

That the queer Sami breaks with the norms of the læstadian ideal, both in terms of sexuality and gender, is also an explanation on the silence in itself. After Sven's participation in the panel discussion, he wrote a blog post called "Why are you so silent Sápmi?". A response to this post came from a Sami woman that wrote "You know we don't talk about sex life in Sápmi, Sven!". In our interview Sven asked: "Why does it always have to be about sex life when we talk about gay people?". Acknowledging the existence of, or talking about someone being gay, does not have to involve talking about their sex life. But being in a relationship with or being married to someone of the same sex does however challenge the norms connected to the læstadian gender roles, as the story of Anna showed.

Strategies

Stefan Mikaelsson's strategy to change "the masculine norm"

"A queer person is a person who is questioning the ruling norms, and who also question the patriarchal society which I believe we live in. The patriarchy makes women suffer the most, but it also makes men suffer and maybe most of all the young men."

“Young men are submissive to a norm that is not created for young Sami men, and I don't think that all of them want to subjugate to the norm either, and that they feel bad about doing it. But no one has told them or made them realize that it actually might not be a good thing that everyone should be and do the same.”

-Stefan

Stefan Mikaelsson is the only of my informants who lives on the Swedish side of Sápmi. He is also problematizing the masculine ideal, or the “masculine norm” as he refers to it, but unlike my informants on the Norwegian side, he does not connect this ideal to reindeer husbandry, but rather to what he sees as a “patriarchal Swedish society”. Patriarchy is a social structure that grants priority to what is male or masculine over what is seen as female or feminine (Marinucci, 2010: 131). Stefan is in particular problematizing what he sees as “the manly norm”, which he sees as produced by the patriarchal Swedish society and imposed on and internalized by Sami men.

Stefan claims that this masculine norm is not made for Sami men, and he is especially worried about the young Sami men internalizing it. He express that he worries about young Sami men not being told that there is an alternative to this norm, and that they can choose not confirming the masculine expectation in Sápmi. Stefan's strategy is to show these young men that there is an alternative, and he is doing it through, in Butlerian terms, his gender performance. As the major of the Sami Parliament in Sweden, Stefan has a power position which he can use to show the young Sami men an alternative, something he does in terms of using his position as a platform to express his political opinions through words. But most importantly, he shows the alternative by the way he performs his gender. Wearing nail polish and stockings to his traditional Sami national dress for men, the *guakti*, is something that is not in line with the expectations of how a Sami man should dress and perform his gender, and as seen in previous chapter. Stefan gets sanctioned for this through silence. Lately, he has also started to use make up at his public appearances. When Stefan wears nail polish, stockings and make up to his *guakti* at public events where he is participates and represents his role and position as the Sami major, his queer appearance at such arenas is challenging the man's role; Stefan is being true to who he is and performs

his gender in line with it. Stefan started to identify as queer after he found the term by searching online, and through this identity, he says, he was enabled to question the norms both on a personal and on a political level. But his newly discovered queer identity also enables him to dress and perform his gender in a way that challenges these norms, something he is very conscious about. As he says himself: “As politicians we can participate in as many demonstrations and manifestations as we like, for instance, we should take a stand to the violence against women, but nothing is changed before we change the norm.”

Queer theorist Henning Beck writes that the strategy of queers is to undermine and destabilize the heterosexual order and its binary understanding of gender (Beck, 2003: 116). Kari Jegerstad writes that Butler shares Foucault’s view on discourses and the relation between discourse and power. Judith Butler emphasizes that the power that operates discursively is not only regulative, but also productive. When sexuality and identity are subject to a discursive regulation, it also produces understandable, conceptualized forms of sexuality and gender (Jegerstad, 2008: 2). According to Butler, gender is performed and gives meaning within the frames of these discourses. The socially constructed concepts of “men” and “women” are also produced and understood through repetition of the gender performances within these frames (Butler, 1990). By repetition of queer gender performances within a discourse that has a heteronormative framing, it can therefore be possible, as Beck writes, to undermine and destabilize the heterosexual order, and thereby change the norms. This seems to be in line with Stefan’s strategy and goal.

Stefan strategy should also be seen as a strategy of decolonization. Indigenous decolonization is connected to questioning or rejecting what one has been assimilated into, and finding strategies to go back to what’s been lost under the colonial rule (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Stefan is questioning the masculine norms in Sápmi; as he sees the masculine expectation in Sápmi as something imposed by the values of the Swedish patriarchal society, his strategy to change this should also be seen as a decolonization strategy. His queer gender appearance is a decolonization strategy that aims to change the masculine norms for Sami men and thereby affect or change the masculine ideal in Sápmi.

Two spirits as a decolonization strategy

“ *We have the key, we have the key!* ”

-Queer Sami from Finland

I wish to return to the discussion of two-spirits, as identifying with the two-spirit identity and its movement, also can be seen as a decolonization strategy, in terms of rejecting norms and values that are seen as imposed from the State, through assimilation policies or through missionary work. Only one of my informants, Stefan Mikaelsson, used the term decolonization at our interview, but several of my informants talked about the non-acceptance and ostracism of queer Sami or the silence that mediates this, as resulting from imposed norms and values from non-indigenous outsiders, through assimilation policies or missionary work. Identifying with the two-spirit movement, should therefore in line with this, be seen as a decolonization strategy.

At my fieldwork in Umeå, I heard the Finnish queer Sami who identifies as two-spirit, and who was quoted in Chapter 2, repeat several times: *We have the key, we have the key!* This was said by this person in plenum, who encouraged the present queer Sami to embrace their two-spirit identities and with it the role as “the ones who can see more”. From the context that this was stated, I understand that this person sees queer Sami as key holders to the spiritual world. Several of the queer Sami voiced in Chapter 2, connect their queerness to the spiritual world, and two of the queer Sami voiced in this thesis also say they believe that the *noaidies* were gay in the earlier days. Other queer Sami voiced in this chapter say that they believe Sápmi was more open for queers before the missionaries brought Christianity and assimilation policies were enforced by the Norwegian State. Through identifying as two-spirits, queer Sami also hold the key to decolonizing from the sexuality and gender norms that they see as enforced by Christianity and the process and assimilation. Identifying with the two-spirit term and the movement should therefore be seen as a decolonization strategy.

The two-spirit term was coined due to an indigenous need to reject the sexuality and gender-norms enforced by the colonizing powers in the US and Canada. By the coining of the term, the two-spirit movement rejected the binary thinking of the West

and the heteronormative framing on sexuality and gender that this thinking gives and enforces on their communities. The movement aims, in Andrea Smith's words, at decolonizing from "the heteronormativity of settler colonialism" (Smith, 2010) and in doing this "reclaiming, regaining and restoring what has been lost under colonial rule" (Driskill on Cherokee two-spirits, 2011: 110-11). On behalf of this, queer Sami identifying with the two-spirit term and its movement should be seen as a form of resistance to heteronormativity in Sápmi, and as a strategy to decolonize from it.

Through identifying with the two-spirit movement, queer Sami also have the key to re-imagine their queer indigenous bodies as they decolonize it. Native queer theorist Chris Finley writes that the reclaiming of the two-spirit identity is all about re-imagining the queer Native body. He quotes Justin Timberlake, saying it's all about "bringing sexy back", but as Finley remind us with the words of Prince: "sexy never left" (Finley, 2011: 41). Queer Native scholar Daniel Heath Justice writes about his journey to fully embrace and take pleasure in his queer body and sexuality. He simply suggest dropping all shame and taking pleasure and joy in the body and in relation to others, as a strategy of decolonization. He writes "to ignore sex and embodied pleasure in the case of Indigenous liberation is to ignore one of our greatest recourses. It is to deny us one of our greatest gifts". As he puts it: "Every orgasm can be an act of decolonization" (Justice in Taylor, 2008: 106).

Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smiths asks us to pay attention to the fact that indigenous histories often have been written by the pen of the colonizer. In a process of decolonizing it is therefore important to ask what's been left out of history, or history, as she underlines what the word actually means (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). She writes that "negation of indigenous view of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly "primitive" and "incorrect" and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonialism" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 29). Tuhiwai Smith's arguments open up for questioning what's been left out of the writing of Sami history. I have not succeeded in finding any queer appearances in the old sources I've been looking through at the Indigenous and Sami department at the library at UiT, but as Marianne Giertsen was quoted in Chapter 2 "even if no known sources can prove that homosexuality has been institutionalized and legitimized in Sápmi, it does not mean that same-sex

sexuality has not been present” (Giertsen, 2002: 14). The same applied to queer gender appearances. The first extensive sources on Sami culture and religion date back to the writings of the first missionaries who arrived in Sápmi in the late 17th century (Hætta, 2002), and in line with Tuhiwai Smith’s argument, one can question if the missionaries left out what they condemned. Tuhiwai Smith also writes that Indigenous history that is written through the colonizing pen is written and constructed around binary categories (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012: 32). This also opens up for questioning if the earlier sources left out what they *did not see*. According to Derrida, what is seen as different, not identical and discernible to the rest of a group often appears as invisible from a Western binary perspective. Derrida terms this invisible position as *différance* (Derrida in Sandoval, 200:147). With this term Derrida underlines and criticizes the Western binary thought for not acknowledging difference within groups. Sandoval draws on Derrida when emphasizing that the *différance* is invisible in itself, as exposure of *différance* within the frames of the binary Western thought can cause the whole system to collapse (Derrida in Sandoval, 2000: 150). One can therefore question if the missionaries and the outsiders who wrote the earliest sources on Sami history left out the queer gender appearances in Sápmi, as queer Sami and their position as *différance* might have been invisible from a perspective framed by the heteronormative Western binary.

Through identifying with the two-spirit identity and movement, queer Sami find a source of empowerment. This opens up for a re-imagining of the queer Sami body that enables queer Sami to re-imagine their roles from the past, even if there are no written sources on it. As Tuhiwai Smith writes, “telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the past are all strategies which are commonly employed by indigenous people struggling for justice” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999: 34-5). The re-imagining of the queer Sami body that is connected to the past therefore enables queer Sami to reclaim their roles in the present. Through the reclaiming of such roles, queer Sami reclaim their rights to define outside of the heteronormative binary in the present, and to be given the space to do it. The question is however whether an English term, a term from an “outsider’s” language, can open up for the inclusion and acceptance that is needed on the “inside”, or from the center, in Sápmi where the majority speaks and relates to the Sami/Scandinavian languages as their heart languages.

Bonju

“We were talking about reviving forgotten words, we were talking about creating new vocabularies for ourselves, so that we can discuss and talk about ourselves. It is incredibly important that a language is alive, vivid and thriving. We did not force or try to get back to what we have lost, we just sat down thinking that, ok, it is nice to have words for queer in Norwegian, Swedish or Finnish. But if we decide just to use them, then we miss an important point, because obviously these words do exist in a way in our languages, we just need to find them, rediscover them.”

-Queer Sami, Umeå

“ Bonju. It is important for me to lift this word in the Sami communities. Not just to inform people that we exist, but also demand to be accepted.”

-Lemet

The artist, writer, editor and art curator Harmony Hammond criticized the invisibility of lesbian artist in the 1970s and in her call for more lesbian presence within the field of art she wrote; “to name is to make present. If you do not name, you do not have a cultural history, and if you do not have a cultural history, you do not exist” (Hammond in Motta and Motta, 2011: 82). The same goes in regard of queer Sami. At my fieldwork in Umeå, the need to name who they are, and the need of a term, preferably in the Sami languages was addressed at the workshop that I took part in, in connection to the release of the Queering Sápmi book. The participants at this workshop were queer Sami, their family members, supporters and queer allies from the three Scandinavian countries in Sápmi, and we were divided into groups to discuss and map the needs of queer Sami. The quote above is from the presentations of the group discussion of queer Sami and their family members, presented in plenum for the rest of the workshop participants. The group addressed a need for terms that describe who they are in their own indigenous languages. The quote also shows that they believe that there once have been such terms in the Sami languages, terms that have been lost, silenced. Languages are rooted in culture, and to rediscover or re-create such terms can therefore be helpful for queer Sami in claiming their space and acceptance in the Sami communities, a strategy to break the silence. As Audre Lorde

writes: “give name to the nameless, so it can be heard” (Lorde in Sandoval, 2000: 1).

The term two-spirit is a term in English, and it is therefore questionable if the center will accept this term from the margin. As the quote from my fieldwork in Umeå shows, there is a lack of words for “queer” in the Sami languages, and for the Sami who speak Sami as their first languages, such words can therefore appear as words from the “outside”. If the queer Sami margin can present words to the center that are rooted in their languages, this can be a strategy to gain visibility, acceptance and their space in the “inside”. One of my informants, Lemet, has found his own solution to this. He identify as *bonju*. *Bonju* is a word in north-Sami that is directly translated from the Norwegian word for queer, *skeiv*. In Norwegian, this means bent or oblique, as a binary word to straight. In the article I wrote on Lemet for Gaysir, called “Bonju and proud”, he talks about how he uses this word to gain more visibility in Sami communities. It is his strategy to break the silence. Lemet is using Facebook actively in this, where he has his own page called “Bonju news and happenings”. Here he shares news and events that are related to queer Sami. He also shares pictures and his personal and political opinions on the north-Sami language. Of my eight informants, Lemet is the only one who used or talked about the term *bonju*. As my interviews were conducted in Norwegian, it is however, possible that some of the informants use the word in Sami. At my fieldwork in Umeå, I heard the word being used by others then Lemet.

Through using and introducing the non-queer Sami to the word *bonju*, or other words in the Sami languages, queer Sami use the power of language to claim their space in the Sami communities. Languages are linked to culture, and terms in other languages can therefore create distance, which a term in the indigenous language can serve to erase. When Lemet is introducing the non-queer Sami to a term describing who he is in his indigenous language, he is also including himself into the language that is rooted in his culture. It is therefore an efficient strategy not only in gaining visibility, but also in gaining acknowledgement and acceptance from the center.

The term *bonju* has clear parallels to other queer indigenous people who have claimed their space in their communities through their indigenous languages. The *takatāpui*, queer Maories, in New Zealand are one such example. The word *takatāpui* originates

in the indigenous *te Reo Maori* language, and it originally means “intimate friendship”, but it has come to take on a new meaning in the recent 20-25 years, and is now recognized as the word for “intimate relationship with same sex” (Murray: 2003). The Canadian anthropologist David A. B. Murray, who specializes on queer Maori men, writes that he has noticed an increased use of the term *takatāpui* in Maori daily life conversations. He sees this as a result of the word being more used in Maori media, and the growth of a *takatāpui* literature. But despite of this, Murray also notes that the majority of Maori men with a homosexual orientation still prefer to use the English words gay or homosexual about themselves. The Maori people constitute 15% of the national population in New Zealand, but as a result of assimilation policies only 4-8% of the Maori population speak *te Reo Maori* fluently (Murray: 2003). Murray writes that by using the term *takatāpui*, queer Maori also communicate that they speak *te Reo Maori*, and some therefore choose not to use this term. Murray notes that the term can therefore also appear as excluding for the queer Maori who do not speak the language. The Sami have, just like the Maori, been exposed to assimilation policies with the result that many Sami today don’t master the Sami languages. *Bonju* therefore runs the same risk as *takatāpui*: to appear as excluding for those who do not master the indigenous Sami languages.

What both *bonju* and *takatāpui* share, however, is the political value in a term that points out their intersectional position, as the terms communicate both queerness and indigenous identity. Through identifying as *bonju* or *takatāpui*, and by confronting the center with these terms, the position and the voices in the margin will become more visible in both queer and indigenous political and social settings.

By claiming or re-claiming terms in indigenous languages, queer indigenous people are enabled to define on their own conditions. Murray draws on Roscoe who refers to the two-spirit movement and emphasizes that English words for sexual identifications like gay, lesbian, bisexual are not terms rooted in the indigenous languages, and the intent of these terms does not necessarily represent who they are (Roscoe in Murray, 2003: 236). The term *bonju* is coined by queer Sami in the Sami language, and not by outsiders, and is therefore based on queer indigenous conditions. But as the term *bonju* is a translation of a the Norwegian word for queer, it also differs from the term two-spirit that was coined as a critique of the Western binary thought. The term queer

also risk reinforcing the binary thinking it is meant to be a critique of, with its opposition to heteronormativity. In line with this, it can be argued that the term *bonju* also reinforces this binary. The term can also appear as excluding for the queer Sami who don't master the north-Sami language, just like the term *takatāpui* can do for the queer Maori not mastering the te Reo Maori language. A positive aspect of the term *bonju* is however, as shared with the term *takatāpui* but not the term two-spirit, that it is in an indigenous language. A term in the indigenous Sami language, which the majority of the Sami speak, can be a powerful strategy to gain visibility and to break the silence in Sápmi.

Summary

This chapter has investigated what was revealed when the queer Sami voices in this thesis broke the silence. The chapter has discussed the central position of heteronormativity and two ideals that it supports, the masculine ideal for men and the Christian/læstadian ideal. This does not mean that heteronormativity does not support other ideals in Sápmi, but that the two ideals in particular was highlighted by my informants. This chapter have also revealed and discussed three strategies in breaking the silence and in gaining more visibility and acceptance in Sápmi. This is Stefan Mikaelsson personal strategy to change the masculine ideal, identifying with the two-spirit movement as a decolonization strategy and the coining of the term “bonju” in the Sami language.

Chapter five: Conclusive remarks

While writing this thesis

This thesis has investigated the silence of queerness in Sápmi. When I set out to do my fieldworks and interviews in 2013, the silence was far more present than it is today. In the last year, while writing this thesis, I've got to witness a great gained visibility of queer Sami, both inside and outside of Sápmi. The silence has been broken in many ways, in the margin and in the center in Sápmi, but also outside of Sápmi's borders. The debate at Pride House was arranged just a few months before the election at the Norwegian Sami Parliament. After participating at this debate, Sven Henriksen wrote his blog post "Why are you so silent Sápmi?", that got response from a central politician, Kirsti Guvsám for NSR, Norske Samers Riksforbund (Norwegian Sámi Association). On her blog Guvsám encouraged the center to break the silence, and she also showed her support of queer Sami in a press release, where she stated that homophobia should not be accepted in Sápmi. NSR got the mandate at the election, and the elected Sami Parliament president, Aili Keskitalo, representing NSR, honored the work of queer Sami at her New Year speech the same year. The following summer, in 2014, I participated at the indigenous Riddu Riddu festival in Manndalen where the Sami Parliament's stand was represented by a *lavvo* that was covered in a rainbow flag. The gained visibility of queer Sami should first and foremost be seen in connection with the work of Queering Sápmi and the release of their book, which has empowered queer Sami to raise their voices from the margin. The Queering Sápmi project is receiving media attention both inside and outside of Sápmi, and my Sami friend who back in 2012 claimed that queer Sami doesn't exist is today frequently e-mailing me articles on their work. Queering Sápmi also recently, in October 2014, arranged the first Sami Pride in history in Kiruna, in the Swedish geographical Sápmi. The first queer Sami organization, Queer Sámit, was also founded at this event.

What did the silence hide? Implementation of theory and findings

This thesis has questioned what the silence in Sápmi hides, and in seeking answers to this I have aimed at integrating queer theory in my work. For me as a researcher this has entailed keeping a critical approach towards heteronormativity and binary thinking in my writing. I have been enabled and found support in this by the work of queer theorists, or scholars who also aim to integrate a queer theoretical approach in their work. In doing this, I have drawn on the work on scholars such as Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Arnfinn Andersen and Tiina Rosenberg. I have also used, and especially valued, the work of Native scholars who integrate queer theoretical approaches in their work, such as Chris Finley, Andrea Smith, Scott Lauria Morgensen, Qwo-Li Driskill, and Daniel Heath Justice.

I have also used the work of the black feminist scholars bell hooks and Audre Lorde in my work. Through this, and especially through bell hooks terms “margin” and “center”, I have been able to analyze the intersectional position of queer Sami. The privilege is located in the center, which locates minorities in the margin. In regard to queer Sami, this is placing queer Sami on the margin both in the queer community and in Sápmi. When media write about queer Sami, the term “double minority” is often used. Marianne Giertsen’s article, which I have also used in this thesis, use the term “minority within a minority”. I used the term “double minority” in several of my interviews, and asked my informants if they found it problematic to be in such a position, but the informants who were asked this question all answered that it was not something they think much about or problematize in their daily lives. Informant Andreas did for instance tell me that he rather sees it as a source of double pride rather than something problematic.

What all of my informants have in common is that they today are proud to be who they are. But when analyzing the silence and the different aspects of it, the intersectional perspective and the terms center and margin proved to be more efficient terms to use as analytical tools than double minority or minority within minority. Through the intersectional perspective, and bell hooks’ terms “center” and “margin” in particular, I was enabled to highlight that the silence is more present in the margin

in Sápmi than in the queer community. Through queer theorist Judith Butler's focus on sanctions I was also enabled to put this in connection to the negative sanctions from the center, and through this also highlighted that negative sanctions are given from the center to the margin to a higher extent in Sápmi than in the queer community.

The intersectional perspective acknowledges that different streets of oppression meet in the intersectional crossroads of the individual. This means that if queer Sami are sanctioned for being Sami in the queer community, it must be seen in connection with the Sami's positions as ethnic minorities, and that the racism streets therefore cross in their intersectional crossroads. If queer Sami are sanctioned for being queer in Sápmi, this must be seen in connection with the heteronormativity street crossing the intersectional crossroads of queer Sami, too. However, the queer Sami who break the silence in this thesis reveal that they are first and foremost sanctioned in Sápmi and not in the queer community. The interviews with my informants also reveal that the silence in Sápmi can be seen as a sanction in itself, as it mediates non-acceptance and ostracism. These were the different aspects of the silence that were investigated in Chapter 3, and also revealed that heteronormativity stands strong in Sápmi.

Heteronormativity intersects with other systems of norms, and is connected to ideals. Chapter four investigated what was revealed when queer Sami broke the silence, and through the voices of my informants, this chapter could reveal that heteronormativity supports two ideals in particular in Sápmi. This is the masculine ideal and the Christian/læstadian ideal. This means that queer Sami are not only sanctioned for not confirming heteronormativity alone, but also for not confirming the ideals that heteronormativity as a norm system is connected to.

Chapter 3 also revealed three strategies in breaking the silence and in gaining more visibility in Sápmi. One of these strategies is to identify with the two-spirit movement, a strategy that Chapter 2 also investigated. Chapter 2 showed that there are no written sources on queer Sami appearances, at least none that I have found. The two-spirit movement originated and emerged in indigenous contexts in US and Canada, but through the memberships in the international indigenous imagined community, queer Sami are enabled to identify with this movement. Identifying with

the two-spirit movement also opens up for queer Sami to re-imagine the queer Sami body and their roles in Sami history. And, as Chapter 2 also shows, several of the queer Sami voices in this thesis believe that it hasn't always been as silent in Sápmi. When Chapter 4 picks up on the two-spirit discussion again, I also argue that identifying with the two-spirit movement can be seen as a strategy of decolonization, and I argue this on behalf of the queer Sami voices in Chapter 2 stating that they believe they weren't as invisible in Sápmi before assimilation policies and Christianization. Chapter 4 also investigated the personal strategy of Stefan Mikaelsson to decolonize from the masculine ideal and the use of the term "bonju" in the north-Sami language to gain more visibility in Sápmi.

Conclusion

To conclude, the silence in Sápmi has been hiding the following; Through the international indigenous imagined community queer Sami are enabled to mirror in, and identify with indigenous people who reject the gender binary and don't confirm heteronormativity, like the two-spirit movement in the US and Canada. Through this queer Sami are also enabled to claim, or in Chris Finley's words, re-imagine their queer indigenous body and its historical position. The queer Sami voiced in chapter two believes that the queer Sami body has been more visible in Sápmi historically, and that it has not always have been as silent as it is today.

The silence in Sápmi today has many aspects. Firstly, the silence is more present in the margin in Sápmi than in the queer community. In the margin in Sápmi there are also queer Sami who are completely silent, and not out of the closet. The silence in Sápmi can be seen as a cultural trait, and not being confrontational also seems to be an expectation in Sápmi. However, this also points to that queerness is something to be confrontational about. The silence from the center in Sápmi mediates non-acceptance and ostracism, and should therefore also be seen as a sanction. There are also stories about more physical, verbal and violent sanctions that queer Sami has received for being queer, something that also points out the central position of heteronormativity in Sápmi.

When the queer Sami in this thesis broke the silence, two ideals that are supported by heteronormativity were also revealed and investigated. These are the masculine ideal for men and the Christian/læstadian ideal. This does not mean that heteronormativity does not support other ideals in Sápmi, but that these two ideals in particular that was highlighted by my informants. This thesis has also revealed and discussed three strategies in breaking the silence and in gaining more visibility and acceptance in Sápmi. This is identifying with the two-spirit movement as a decolonization strategy, Stefan Mikaelsson personal strategy to change the masculine ideal and finally, the coining of the term “bonju” in the Sami language.

Appendix: List of informants

- Stefan Mikaelsson, heterosexual and queer Sami Parliament mayor in Sweden
- Svein Henriksen, homosexual man
- Lemet, homosexual man
- Mikke, heterosexual man, who just transitioned from woman to man
- Chris, pansexual man, who is waiting for his ftm transitional surgery
- Andreas, somewhere between gay and bisexual, man
- Anna, lesbian woman
- Lesbian woman



Mari Boine performing at the opening of Pride House 2013.
Photo: LLH Oslo og Akershus



Stefan Mikaelsson giving his speech at the opening of Pride House 2013.
Photo: LLH Oslo og Akershus



From the debate “What is the silence in Sápmi hiding?” at Pride House 2013.
Photo: LLH Oslo og Akershus



From the debate “What is the silence in Sápmi hiding?” at Pride House 2013.
Photo: LLH Oslo og Akershus



The Queer Sami flag. At the Queering Sápmi release in Umeå, Sweden, September 2013. Photo: Ane Hedvig H. Løvold

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