



ARTICLE

## **MAPPING HISTORICAL, MATERIAL AND AFFECTIVE ENTANGLEMENTS IN A SÁMI WOMAN'S DISCRIMINATORY EXPERIENCES IN AND BEYOND FINNISH BOARDING SCHOOL**

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## **Mapping Historical, Material and Affective Entanglements in a Sámi Woman's Discriminatory Experiences in and beyond Finnish Boarding School**

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### **Abstract**

This paper draws on new feminist materialist and posthuman theories to explore discrimination experienced by Sámi attendees at Finnish boarding schools. The aim is to shift attention away from the human actor to a wider field of power relations, and consider discrimination as force relations, emerging dynamically through assemblages of, for example, material, corporeal, historical, organic, discursive and affective elements. The case study, taken from the structured interview survey data from one Sámi woman, is used to demonstrate material, affective and historical forces, through which events of discrimination emerge. We argue that material objects and places and their histories are not inert, fixed backgrounds against which things occur, nor important contextualising features of situated events. Rather, they can be seen as significant actants in the rendering of the Sámi as the Other. Recognising how traces of place and history and material objects become revitalised within acting assemblages can provide some powerful insights into the barriers and opportunities the Sámi boarding school students encountered in their everyday lives and how they coped with experiences later in life.

**Keywords:** Sámi; racism; discrimination; boarding school; posthuman.

## Introduction

This study draws upon structured interview research to construct, through one Sámi woman's experiences, an exploration of how Sámi people's relationships with place, its people, landscape and materiality are entangled with discriminatory experiences in and beyond boarding school in Finland. The data was originally collected through structured interviews in Canada and Finland (see Juutilainen, 2011). From this data, three case studies were developed which are included in the second author's doctoral research. Finnish boarding schools have been previously discussed in other research as arenas where colonial-style education reinforced the repression of Sámi language and culture which resulted in the loss of cultural symbols and a fracturing of Sámi identity (Aikio-Launieimi, 1995; Magga, 1997; Valle, 1998; Valkonen, 1998; Kuokkanen, 2003; Rasmus, 2008; Lehtola, 2012; Juutilainen, Miller, Heikkilä and Rautio, 2014). What is missing from the current dialogue (not only from the research into the education of the Sámi people, but also more generally within educational scholarship and research) is the centrality of history and material objects to understanding their presence in events of discrimination.

Our study resonates and articulates with an emerging strand of research that explores the complexities of gendered subjectivities and force relations as connected to non-human material objects (Zabrodzka, Linnel, Laws and Davies, 2011; Ringrose and Rawlings, 2015), affectivity, history and place (Walkerdine, 2010; Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012; Walkerdine, Olsvold and Rudberg, 2013; Ivinson and Renold, 2013a; 2013b; Renold and Ivinson, 2014; 2015; Huuki and Renold, 2015). We attempt to make these complexities visible by broadening the scope of analysis to produce new insights into the dialogue and exploring how history and material objects are entangled as affective intensities in the discrimination experienced by the Sámi. To understand this, we were drawn to consider the specific materiality and history of the place that might be impacting Sámi people's experiences in and beyond boarding school. We came to recognise that discriminatory practices were often tied to material objects and places (Guattari, 1995/2005) in the interview talk of the Sámi, and how places and objects produced strong affective charges for them. We identified some of these experiences as part of a larger scale refrain and thus the past became present as repeated similarity in the respondents' interview talk. (See Ivinson and Renold, 2013b.)

In exploring the affective, material and historical entanglements of the discriminatory experiences of the Sámi in and after boarding school, we present interview data from one Sámi woman, which illustrates how discrimination is not merely discursive or linguistic, but a product of various human and non-human forces which carry affective traces of the past. In our conclusion we briefly suggest that recognising how material objects as well as traces of place and history become revitalised within acting assemblages can provide some powerful insights into the barriers and new opportunities Sámi boarding school students encountered in their everyday lives and how they coped later in life.

### **Discrimination in a Nordic Sami context**

The Sámi homeland region, 'Sápmi', spans the circumpolar areas of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Kola Peninsula of Russia. There is a total population of approximately 100,000 across the four countries, of which approximately 10,000 reside in Finland. (Hassler, Soininen, Sjölander and Pukkala, 2008). The Sámi are the only ethnic group in the European countries to be recognised as indigenous people. In Finland, Sweden and Norway a Sámi is defined as a person of Sámi origin who feels oneself to be Sámi and who either has Sámi as their first language, or had at least one parent or grandparent who had Sámi as their first language. In Russia a Sámi is defined by self-ascription. There are ten Sámi languages in total, and three of them are spoken in the Sámi homeland area of Finland. The Sámi living in Finland can thus be divided linguistically in three groups: North Sámi, Inari Sámi and Skolt Sámi. The largest group is North Sámi (davvisámegiella), which is used in Finland, Sweden and Norway (for more information see: [www.samediggi.fi](http://www.samediggi.fi)). What is important is the connectedness to Sámi ancestry, the relationship to Sámi community, language and via language to Sámi culture and a feeling of being Sámi (Lehtola, 2002).

The Sámi homeland area in Finland includes the municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari, Utsjoki and part of Sodankylä, covering an area of 35,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The Sámi cultures are built on the traditional livelihoods of reindeer herding, fishing and gathering over a period of thousands of years. Sámi communities have experienced a structural change via assimilation practices, and the rapid decline of the traditional Sámi livelihoods of fishing and reindeer herding to make way for industry and tourism. We argue that these changes, accompanied by unequal power relations have had a massive impact in Sámi people's lives, causing anxiety and experiences of discrimination.

Research critiquing discriminatory power relations between the Sámi and Nordic nation states began with the rise of indigenous resistance in the 1970's (see: Keskitalo, 1976). Although the term "colonialism" has been discussed more widely among scholars in Norway with regard to State-Sami relationships due to their pronounced assimilation policy, the use of the term to describe the Finnish-state – Sámi relationship is contested (see: Nyysönen, 2013; Lehtola, 2016). However, although there was no formal assimilation policy targeted at the Sámi from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until World War II and into the 1960s, governments in the Nordic countries systematically repressed Sámi language and culture while engaged in the process of nation building. Experiences of colonisation among the Sámi have varying contexts across the Nordic countries and in comparison to indigenous peoples worldwide. However, the common experience of being subjected to the ideologies of the majority population, which labelled non-European/non-Western ways of knowing and being as inferior, produces similar negative outcomes (Kuokkanen, 2003). Lehtola (2016: 31) further notes:

Nordic Sámi policies have been characterised by structural injustice on many different levels from government action to local relations, also among the Sámi themselves. Examining colonial processes and structures strives to clarify what social, linguistic and cultural effects the asymmetrical power relations have.

Investigations of discrimination against the Sámi have been widely documented in the academic literature throughout the Nordic countries. The concept of discrimination has been approached and expanded through a number of concepts, namely colonialism, indirect, direct and perceived discrimination (and specifically racial or ethnic discrimination), individual level and structural level racism (Kvist, 1992; Lehtola, 2004; Hansen, Melhus, Høgmø, and Lund, 2008; Pikkarainen and Brodin, 2008; Bals, Turi, Skre and Kvernmo, 2010). In Sweden, discrimination has been approached from various perspectives such as individual discrimination and structural level discrimination. Individual perspective is meant that the report is based on the discrimination the Sami experience in their day-to-day life. Structural discrimination refers to: "rules, norms, accepted attitudes and behaviour in institutions and other societal structures that constitute obstacles to ethnic [...] minorities being accorded the same rights and opportunities that the majority of the population enjoy. Such discrimination may be visible or concealed and may be intentional or unintentional" (Pikkarainen and Brodin 2008). This highlights the importance of relating these concepts to each other as well as history and the distribution of power in society (Pikkarainen and Brodin, 2008). In Finland, the concepts of discrimination and racism have been elaborated by considering them as interlinked phenomena in which "discrimination is a hypernym and racism has a specific meaning underneath it" (Puuronen 2011: 51). This is brought to light in research into perceived discrimination among the Sámi in Norway which shows how the loss of language or confusion about one's own ethnic identity, including the sense of being between two worlds, is considered as a consequence of colonial history and may have associations with health outcomes (Bals, Turi, Skre and Kvernmo, 2010). Other research has described ways in which discrimination may adversely affect the health of individuals: by creating ethnic divisions in socioeconomic status; and, whereby members of ethnic minorities internalise the majority population's discriminatory ideologies (Ahmed, Mohammed and Williams, 2007; Hansen, Melhus, Høgmø and Lund, 2008; Hassler, Kvernmo and Kozlov, 2008).

### **Discrimination in Boarding Schools in Finland**

One of the central arenas in which discrimination against Sámi people took place in the post-war period was within the education system, and more specifically, boarding schools. Discrimination experienced by indigenous children within boarding schools has been documented worldwide (Smith, 2009), and the situation has been described in depth as part of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2012; 2015) and in comparisons between Canada and Finland (Kuokkanen, 2003; Juutilainen, Miller, Heikkilä and Rautio,

2014) and regarding the situation in Finland investigating specific Sámi groups (Aikio-Launiemi, 1995; Magga, 1997; Rasmus, 2008; Valle, 1998; Valkonen, 1998; Lehtola, 2012). All research reports conclude similar negative outcomes for health and wellbeing regardless of the various education policies or practices of assimilation.

In Finland, the new Public Education Act 1947 made it compulsory for everyone to attend school. In connection with this, boarding schools were built for those children, both Finnish and Sámi, who lived in remote, rural communities (Lassila, 2005; Rasmus, 2008). Boarding schools in Finland did not have blatant assimilation tactics written into their education policy; however, organised education played an important role in gaining control over Sámi land and people (Bastien, Kremer, Kuokkanen and Vickers, 2003). According to Syväoja (2004), the elementary school system, which served as an important supporting pillar in Finnish national identity building, embraced a common practice of excluding Sámi identity. During this time the teaching language was Finnish, with the exception of one school in Utsjoki (Rasmus, 2008). Boarding school demanded Finnishness, forcing children to become “proper” Finnish citizens in various ways, including a strict daily time schedule and Finnish language, food, symbols and clothing, which also entailed punishment for those who did not conform to the new identity (Aikio-Launiemi, 1995; Magga, 1997; Rasmus, 2008; Valle, 1998; Valkonen, 1998; Lehtola, 2012).

Sámi students attending Finnish boarding schools either resided in dormitories on site or were housed with families in the area of the school located up to hundreds of kilometres away from their homes. Some experiences were positive for those students who were placed with Sámi families where cultural continuity was safeguarded. However, this was not always the case. (Lehtola, 2012; Juutilainen, 2011). Within this educational environment, abuses of power occurred between Finns and Sámi but also within Sámi groups, with the Skolt Sámi experiencing the most violence (Rasmus, 2008). As a consequence, Sámi children were taken from the centre of their own culture, moved to the edge of a foreign culture and were only allowed to go home during long holidays, if at all. Sámi childhoods within this environment were rooted in complex contradictory legacies of indigenous and cultural assimilation that entangle with the history of place, shaping everyday practices and experiences for Sámi people. This often resulted in a loss of cultural symbols and a fractured identity or feeling of being ‘between’ two worlds, unable to wholly integrate and adapt to Sámi society or that of the dominant society (Lehtola, 1994: 217–223; Aikio-Launiemi, 1995; Magga, 1997; Valle, 1998; Valkonen, 1998; Kuokkanen, 2003; Rasmus, 2008).

Building mainly on feminist, critical, and critical race theories, this research has provided an important critique of the socio-cultural and socio-structural operations of race and power in indigenous people’s lives. It has allowed for a more nuanced mapping of the complex effects of ethnic-based power inequalities and their impact on the production of normative citizenship, which tend to narrow indigenous people’s rights to their cultures and restrict

possibilities for subjectivity formation. The restriction of this body of research is that it is often based on the binary logic of victim-perpetrator, through a limited lens. For the purpose of this study, we define discrimination as force relations, emerging dynamically through assemblages of, for example, material, corporeal, historical, organic, discursive and affective elements. This description allows us to build on socio-material approaches that enable us to explore discriminatory forces operating in a wider discursive-material field of power relations, to which we now turn.

### **Methodology: Mapping the discriminatory experiences of the Sámi**

For the purposes of this paper we have selected from the larger body of research material generated in Canada and Finland, the data collected in 2010 and 2011 among the Sámi from Inari municipality, Finland (to protect the anonymity of respondents living in rural areas, detailed participant information is not given). Ethical approval was received from the University of Oulu, Finland for the data collected in Finland, and for the data collected in Canada, ethical approval was received from the Six Nations Ethics Committee. For the original data collection, all participants signed informed consent forms to participate in the study.

A purposive sampling method was used in both countries. It aimed to recruit equal numbers of male and female participants who had attended a Finnish boarding school or an Indian residential school or who had a family member who had attended. In Finland, 20 participants were recruited, aged 18 to 80 years old. 25% of participants were aged 18-39 years old; 35% were aged 40-59 years old; and 40% were aged 60-79 years old. The ratio of female to male participants was 60%:40%, similar to the ratio of participants in Canada. In Finland, collaborative partners included Samisoster (an NGO mandated to monitor, maintain and promote the Sámi status and rights of indigenous social, health and well-being issues nationally and internationally), a planner from Samediggi, (the Sámi Parliament in Finland) and a public health nurse from Ivalo. All of the research collaborators work closely with the Sámi community in Inari and assisted in identifying the Sámi who had attended a Finnish boarding school or who had a family member attend. For study purposes, Sámi identity was defined by self-identification. All participants were from Inari municipality, and reported their home language, spoken with parents or grandparents, as North Sámi (65%), Skolt Sámi (20%) and Inari Sámi (15%).

The original survey tool was adapted, with permission, from an "Ontario Urban Aboriginal Survey" for the "Our Health Counts Research Projects" (see Juutilainen, 2011). The survey tool, which was originally in English, was reviewed and discussed with Sámi community collaborators and members of the second author's research group with regard to which language it would be most appropriate to translate the survey (Finnish or one of the three Sámi languages). It was decided that the Finnish language would be suitable for this purpose

since it would be the common language of all participants. Therefore, the survey was translated to Finnish. A Finnish translator conducted 20 structured interviews in Finland with the participants in Finnish. Each participant was interviewed once and interview length was between one and two hours. The interviews were recorded with permission and later transcribed and translated into English. The original questionnaire contained 73 questions in total: 62 closed-ended and 11 open-ended questions that solicited responses about socio-economic status, experiences of discrimination while accessing health services and individual experiences of ethnic discrimination, as well as residential school and boarding school experiences. We noticed that the responses, especially to three of the open-ended questions regarding boarding school attendance, Sámi identity and colonization and the impacts of these on Sámi health and wellbeing, generated rich accounts of Sámi experiences within Finnish boarding schools. We selected for more nuanced analysis the narrative responses to these three questions by all 20 participants. They produced a total of 27 pages of transcribed research material (For details, readers are directed to Juutilainen, forthcoming 2017).

The topic is of particular interest to us as indigenous scholars: the first author Tuija is Inari Sámi from Finland and the second author Sandra is indigenous from North America (Oneida Nation of the Thames) respectively. Although of Sámi heritage, Tuija spent an intense period of time studying the traditions and histories of the Sámi cultures, in addition to reflecting on her own Inari Sámi background as a starting point for the analysis. To gain an understanding of the historical and neo-liberalising force relations at work as Sami traditions evolve, we (Tuija and Sandra) spent a number of sessions over a two-month period reading and re-reading, both together and individually, the Sámi interview accounts elicited by the open-ended questions, while simultaneously thinking about the traditions and histories of Sámi culture. During the analysis, Tuija was constantly reminded of her own past in a Sámi community, where name-calling words such as “mud-blood Sámi” [kurasaamelainen; rapalappalainen] were commonly used by both the Finns and the Sámi against Sámi who also had Finnish heritage. The analysis also made her recall how many people’s lives in her own Sámi community were infused with tensions that seemed characterised by indigenous legacies of what proper Sámi people were expected to be and do and what proper Finnish people were expected to be and do, and the resultant contradicting pressures exerted on them.

Our preliminary analysis brought to light how structural changes, accompanied by assimilation practices and discrimination by the Finns (and sometimes also by other Sámi) had caused anxieties and traumas in respondents – traumas that surface as a set of powerful affective forces in interview accounts. Analysis also rendered visible a complex set of values and associations held by the respondents, anxieties surrounding enforced conditions at boarding schools and traditions rooted in the Sámi past. This was most noticeable in the interviewees’ talk of personal skills and communal practices related to their culture and language and how they negotiated the affordances of the northern landscape.



In order to understand in a more holistic yet nuanced way how personal experiences are connected to wider socio-historical and colonising force relations in Sámi people's lives, for the purposes of this study we selected from the larger dataset interview data of one North Sámi woman, who we have named "Aletta". At the time of the interview, she was in her mid-sixties. She has first-hand experience from a Finnish boarding school since she went to a Finnish village outside of the Sámi homeland area to attend boarding school, and resided with a private Finnish family for about five years. Aletta's interview included nuanced reflections on her own and other Sámi young people's experiences of discrimination at boarding school as well as those of the wider community. Her lengthy articulations provided a vivid illustration of the complex processes of managing and negotiating the conflicting forces inherent to becoming a Sámi woman. All quotations used in this study were translated verbatim from Finnish to English. Tuija, who is a native Finnish speaker, also reviewed the interview tape/transcribed data in Finnish and includes the additional insight this provides in the analysis. While the paper draws on the interview with one woman, a narrative that must be located within broader cultural contexts pertaining to Sámi young people and education, a case study (Yin, 2014: 47–49) does have wider socio-cultural resonance, providing insights into how the history of the place and material objects play important roles in the events designated as discrimination. Our aim is to become attuned to the full ecology of experience through three excerpts from her interview that offer food for thought about how discrimination emerges in the socio-materialities of Sámi boarding schools, and specifically, the ways in which place, space, objects, affect and history entangle in predictable and unpredictable ways (see Huuki and Renold, 2015).

### **History, place, materiality and affect**

In analysing these flows of forces, we draw on new feminist materialist and posthuman theories, which call for non-dichotomous understandings of nature–culture interactions, and thus challenge us to take seriously the post-individual and non-anthropocentric and the intra-action (Barad, 2007) of more-than-human worlds (Barad, 2007; Alaimo and Hekman, 2008; Braidotti, 2013; Manning, 2013). In contrast to the usual "interaction," which presumes the prior existence of independent entities, in Barad's agential realist ontology, "individuals" do not pre-exist as such but rather materialize in intra-action: "To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. [Discriminations] emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating." (Barad, 2007: ix.). Our aim is to shift attention away from the individualised account to a wider field of power relations and from victim-perpetrator dichotomies to forces that pull in many directions at once.

These flows of force were present in Aletta's talk, for example, about how material objects such as traditional Sámi utensils and the traditional Sámi occupation of reindeer herding were tied up with experiences of discrimination, producing strong and often contradicting affective

charges for her. In feminist new materialist theories, affect has been considered in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms as “life force”, and as a body’s capacity to affect and be affected (Coleman and Ringrose, 2013). Affect is not “a personal feeling”, but a prepersonal intensity which “is felt before it is thought: it has visceral impact on the body before it gives subjective or emotive meaning...Affect is...different from emotion: it is an a-subjective bodily response to an encounter. Emotion comes later; a classifying or stratifying of affect” (Hickey-Moody and Malins, 2007: 9). So in considering these affective traces surfacing in Aletta’s speech, we attempt to become sensitive to the indirect forms of communication, focusing especially on the forms of speech that are “indirect...unthought and unprocessed and yet communicated” (Walkerdine, Osvold and Rudberg, 2013: 276). For example, Aletta tells how the heavy colonial past of the Sámi produced social expectations that carried connotations of educational and working life traditions as legacies different from those of the Finnish (see Walkerdine, Osvold and Rudberg, 2013). Affective charges of the past further place her experiences of discrimination in the context of history (Walkerdine, Osvold and Rudberg, 2013). This in turn allows us to glimpse those ‘transversal flashes’ (Guattari, 1995/2005: 93) where affective traces of the past leap across time–space domains created by experience in a complex network of shifting discursive-material forces that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call ‘assemblages’.

In a similar vein to previous studies conducted in other settings (Ivinson and Renold, 2013; Renold and Ivinson, 2014; 2015; Holford, Renold and Huuki 2013; Huuki and Renold 2015), considering force relations as assemblages enables us to place elements of various qualities and features into the same analytical frame. This allows recognising the power of the specifically emplaced (northernmost Finnish Lapland) and historical (colonial) bonds between the Finns and the Sámi and their impact on relationships among the Sámi, the traditional livelihoods of the Sámi (reindeer herding), material objects (tools, clothes, rocks), class (socio-economic background and poverty) body parts (hands in pockets) and natural resources (fire, water). Thus ‘assemblages’ can be made up of all manner of matter: corporeal, mechanical, historical, discursive, organic and less-than-conscious, that carry affective charges. Agency, events and phenomena (including discrimination) emerge in these assemblages.

Our study is woven through different sedimentary historical layers: the present time of the interview, Aletta’s memories of local community practices from her childhood to adulthood, and references to historical traditions and communal practices of the Sámi. The analysis in the next section encapsulates two interconnected themes related to these layers: First, discrimination among the Sámi children did not always work according to the binary logic of (Sámi) victim and (Finnish) perpetrator, but was also characterised by unequal distribution of power *among* the Sámi. Mocking own community members operated in many ways as community survival (Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012) as the Sámi struggled to insulate the collective from further harm through acts of mocking in the face of enforced changes caused

by cultural assimilation. Second, we hope to gesture towards the limits of a humanistic and individualised theorisation of ethnic-based discrimination by opening up boarding school children's experiences to the material, discursive and semiotic elements, including the socio-historical and affective force relations with which assemblages are always entangled. Recognising Sámi self-determination in current research practices by Sámi scholars, and being cognizant of how much past research about Sámi people has been conducted by outside researchers, two Sámi scholars have reviewed earlier drafts of this article and provided constructive remarks.

### **Findings and Discussion: Historical and material entanglements of discrimination of the Sámi in and beyond boarding school**

Previous studies have examined name-calling as one of the powerful and widespread discursive tools for controlling and violating the Sámi (Rasmus, 2008; Puuronen, 2011). Name-calling has for the most part been examined through discourse as a form of ethnic policing around "proper" citizenship. However, concerned solely with linguistic and discursive terms, the former research has neglected an acknowledgement of the entangled nature of the historical and non-human material elements in discrimination. Although words and phrases are important indicators in discriminative practices, we seek to elucidate how discrimination was experienced by young Sámi people in boarding schools as not merely discursive or linguistic, but as a product of various human and non-human forces:

[I]t was always when being there, you were dirty, you were like this, always the rotten. It was like this regular expression, a rotten Lappish [mätöläppalainen], it was always like rotten [mätö, mädäntynyt], it was a thing that has affected my self-esteem a terrible amount. It's in a way mentally affected, surely affects to this day and it affects a lot for sure... Especially mocking the clothes was one of these that they bullied and mocked, that I experienced as being really hard. And that I was always considered lower, a rotten Lapp that you were like a rotten person.

The term "rotten" [mätö], used in the parochial language of the North-Finnish dialect spoken in particular localities, carries a peculiar mixture of connotations including rotten organic material, laziness and rural poverty. Here we can see how the "rotten" materiality in connection with the clothes on the Sámi person's "dirty" and "lazy" body intra-acts with discourses of proper modern young Finnish citizenship. Non-normative, traditional Sámi citizenship is materialised here by the intra-actions of materiality (clothes), the discursive ("rotten" as something repulsive and contaminating), time (untreated material that in a matter of days or weeks will spoil and become poisonous), socio-economic status (poverty) and space (rural north). The word "*mätö*" [rotten] itself carries a materiality, and the clothes are not simply representational here but material objects discursively made rotten by the Finns, and

thus contaminated, and symbolically connected to the body of the Sámi person living a life of poverty in the wilderness, which affords the discrimination greater affective and immediate force.

Furthermore, we want to pay attention to the complexities of how the labeling of “rotten” or “dirty” works in specific discursive-material intra-actions with the history of Sámi consumer products. Here we draw on Odd Mathias Haetta (2008), who depicts the shift in perspectives towards life among the Sámi from nature-oriented to human-oriented in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Due to the extremely rural conditions, industrialisation progressed slowly among the populations in the North. People had very limited access to factory-made fabrics or tools and non-degradable materials. Traditional tools, household utensils and textiles made of wood, bone, wool and other organic materials naturally decomposed in the course of human generations and relatively quickly returned to nature. Also, because of the harsh conditions, these items were used as long as possible, so waste was not a problem. In contrast, nowadays one can observe abandoned waste such as scrap, crockery, broken snowmobile rip-saws and plastic products spilling across the surrounding terrain of some properties in the Northern Finnish area.

Given that the environmental-ethical attitude has formed the basis of decisions and actions for millennia, the transformation to the modern lifestyle with its wasteful consumer ideology has been very rapid. The traditional knowledge, based on experience that organic material naturally decomposes and returns to nature gets affectively entangled with new increased wealth, modern lifestyles and improving personal finances, as well as with changes in basic values and attitudes towards nature. Following Haetta (2008: 80), we speculate that affects considered as ‘dirty’, ‘messy’ or “rotten” may well be related to modernisation, industrialisation and technical development, together with the spread of economic wealth that was too rapid for local communities. However, because discrimination works down the line of power – not up – it was the Sámi in boarding school times who were labelled as ‘dirty’ and “rotten”, and in present day discussions about the upkeep of property, despite the fact that unkempt properties can be seen among Sámi and Finnish populations alike.

Through the posthuman material-discursive lens we can see how the name-calling that young Sámi people faced in boarding schools is not simply “individual level” discrimination, located merely in the past, present or in the human. Nor is it to be located between the discourse (the Sámi as the Other) and the stigmatised subject (“rotten Lapp”), as previously assumed (Pikkarainen and Brodin, 2008). Instead, name-calling comes to matter through a long history of material-discursive intra-actions of multiple dynamic forces, and a “Rotten Lapp” emerges in a racialised assemblage entangled with space, time, class and matter through which an embodied rotten, remote, poor, relic of the past – the Sámi abject – is formed. This excerpt makes visible how various elements such as history, time, place and material objects work together and thus become constitutive forces of normative young identities, without any of them being primary.

Much of the existing research focuses on unequal inter-personal relations of the ethnic minorities and majorities, and provides a powerful and important critique of the socio-cultural and socio-structural ethnic and racially-based power relations that manifest in oppressive practices in scenes like the above. However, few approaches would complicate the victim-perpetrator subject positions, or, as we hope to do here and throughout the paper, go beyond critique and explore further the ebb and flow of power relations that make up the directional force of the discrimination. So, instead of considering the discrimination merely as a one-directional action, where Finnish people question the traditional Sámi way of life, and the Sámi victims are undone by the questioning, there are other intra-acting forces: the internal hierarchies of the Sámi, historically built expectations of Sáminess and deep-seated anxiety about the survival of the community. This becomes visible where Aletta recalls situations when children returned home from boarding school for long holidays:

This one thing was a big burden from the school days, that [I] didn't understand why it was so bad then, when one used to spend many months there (in boarding school), always six months and then to come home...They laughed when I couldn't do, with as much skill, what everyone else did. I didn't know all the handicraft what others do, I didn't know everyone's reindeer markings, I couldn't catch a reindeer with a lasso, these kinds of things that were everyday life. And then they laughed when you went to make fire, you couldn't seek out a right type of place where to make a fire and you couldn't get water from the right place. It was a horrible thing that in your own community you weren't good anymore, but not in the dominant community either.

Just as the proper Finnish identity was constituted by specific material-discursive forces, this was also the case among the Sámi. In these settings, certain practices such as *knowing everyone's reindeer markings*, *catching a reindeer with a lasso*, *seeking out the right type of place to make a fire* and *getting water from the right place* were central in terms of proper Sámi identity. These were skills that were expected from both girls and boys, since they were essential to the survival of the community in harsh conditions. Drawing on Valerie Walkerdine (2010) and her colleague's (Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012) study on affective relations in the production and destruction of an industrial community in Wales, the practices illustrated by Aletta had a specific role as part of the rhythms of life, of affective relations and practices that may have protected individuals through a long history of struggle and difficult conditions. It required a great deal of work to embody them, and, spending years in boarding school, far away from their own community, children became disconnected from these practices and lost the skills that were essential for survival in the community (see Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012.) For the community, the absence of children must have been experienced as a terrible and traumatizing loss. In such circumstances, the central concern may well have been keeping the community together and alive in the face of imminent demise, which perhaps

brought a profound sense of anxiety about the very possibility of survival. We consider it important not to locate the Sámi in the binary subject position of victims and the national majority population as perpetrators as previous literature on ethnic-based discrimination has tended to do (Hansen, Melhus, Høgmo, and Lund, 2008; Hansen and Sørli, 2012; Hansen, 2015). Instead, we aim to highlight the unequal distribution of power *among* the Sámi, and its interlinkedness to unconscious affective practices (Walkerdine, 2010), represented as established ways of coping with the profoundly difficult life-and-death struggle confronting the Sámi as they strove to keep their community alive in the face of enforced changes caused by cultural assimilation. Indeed, we have begun to consider the mocking of own community members as drawing a “protective envelope” around the group, which aims to insulate the collective from further harm through acts of denial and resistance (Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012). A resistance that can be seen as keeping one’s community alive and healthy, even if it means denying their own members, whose Saminess was altered at boarding school.

Similarly, our third quote also locates the discrimination against Sami boarding school pupils as part of the wider historical and neo-liberalising force relations at work in Sami homeland areas as old traditions make way for the new. We attempt to offer a glimpse of how educational choices after basic education in boarding school further exposed Sámi young people to other contradictory colonial and indigenous forces. Here, Aletta does not refer to herself. She is reflecting on the situation of many other Sámi, who stayed as reindeer herders after boarding school, and who were appreciated by the Sámi community but remained in the margins of the dominant society, including its welfare state benefits:

A [Sàmi] saying goes that if you won’t make a reindeer herder you have to go to school. It’s that if you’re no good [as a reindeer herder] you have to be put to school. On the other hand the youths who, after elementary school, have remained to practice the work so for instance the Finnish social security system, if you don’t have the second level degree [vocational school or upper secondary school/high school], you won’t be entitled to receive unemployment benefits. That this learning of traditional knowledge, it’s not appreciated. You’re out because you’re a practitioner of Samí reindeer livelihood. Then you feel that am I nothing, have I just been kicking at rocks with my hands in my pockets.

In previous academic literature the phenomenon described by Aletta would have been conceptualised as “individual and structural racism” (Williams and Mohammed, 2009; Chae, Nuru-Jeter, Lincoln and Francis, 2011; Gee and Ford, 2011). In new feminist materialist and posthuman approach it could be framed as a discursive-material assemblage, in which institutional (formal education, social security system), indigenous (reindeer herding), and temporal-spatial-discursive (“old”-rural-traditional and “new”-urban-industrialised) forces pulse

and vibrate among other elements so strongly that they seem to “leak” into the present in the form of anxiety in Aletta’s speech.

In order to understand how one manages and negotiates these multiple contradictory discursive and material forces, the historical becoming of the occupation of reindeer herder must be foregrounded. Like other communal practices, the notion of occupation developed over the millennia in small Sámi communities, where life was organised around rural locations, the four seasons, and seasonal rhythms of reindeer, fish and game and other cycles of nature-cultures. While Finnish assimilation practices strove to impose formal institutional education on Sámi children, from the perspective of the Sámi, formal education is for those not competent enough to acquire the high-level skills of reindeer herding. The highly valued professional expertise of reindeer herder, such as “knowing everyone’s reindeer markings”, or “finding the right type of place to make a fire”, to use the words of Aletta in the previous excerpt, cannot be obtained through formal education. Instead, these skills are material, embodied set of knowledge that can only be learned through intergenerationally transmitted affective practices (Walkerdine, 2010), through which a reindeer herder comes into being, or “becomes”.

These contradictory forces are “interfering” (Barad, 2007: 28) with Aletta’s reflections on Sámi young people who choose between their own ideas of self, stemming from receiving education through the formal education system or traditional knowledge, causing them to seesaw between the two assemblages. If they continued on to vocational school or high school, the Sámi community would regard them as someone who “won’t make a reindeer herder” and thus someone who is “no good and has to be put to school”. However, the ruling discourse of Finnishness has for a long time presupposed the submission of everyone living inside national borders to the rules of the prevailing order (see Butler 1997: 116–117). Therefore, the Finnish formal education system, together with another force, the Finnish social security system, form a powerful flow of force, pressurizing young Sámi people to give up their desires to educate themselves in indigenous ways. Presenting oneself as Sámi reindeer herder, one would risk being positioned as a “failed” person, not competent enough to acquire professional skills acquired from formal education or be a legitimate member of the dominant society. The force of fear is also at work here: the threat that one *might* be cast out of the social security system as a reindeer herder. The Sámi reindeer herder faces the threat of being “nothing”, a position which seems to threaten one’s survival in the community. The colonial discourse with its tendency to misinterpret structural deficiencies as the personal failures of an individual is prominently visible here.

Also, connected to “nothingness”, Aletta’s expression “kicking at rocks with my hands in my pockets” includes two powerful local sayings: “Kicking rocks” symbolises laziness, which another similar expression “hands in pockets” further reinforces. They both carry a special low status in terms of idleness in harsh arctic and subarctic settings, which have historically been characterised by a strong ethos of “working with one’s own hands”. We can thus see how the

saying bears unconscious affects linked to the local and regional past, and ties in with Aletta's reflections, stigmatizing the Sámi as indolent and insignificant as reindeer herders.

Given the long history of the Sámi as the Other to be assimilated and absorbed into Finnish culture, contesting the cultural habits of the Sámi can be seen as attacks that are not merely trials involving the removal of something in the present time. Instead, we suggest that they are phenomena connected to specific, deeply affective practices and traditions shaped over the course of history. Entangled with notions of proper citizenship – as Aletta's account so tangibly illustrates – they are also about breaking the historical links connected to these practices, which when absent, create a sense of loss. (See Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012: 59.)

## **Conclusion**

Previous academic literature has considered ethnic-based discrimination as human-centered, with a tendency to separate out “factors” and “levels” of discrimination into more or less fixed categories. These approaches have been unable to consider the complexities of power relations that often include other-than-human elements. In this paper, our aim has been two-fold: firstly, to understand in a more holistic manner the discrimination that the former Sámi students experienced in Finnish boarding schools and beyond in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We selected a case of one Sámi woman to produce an analysis capable of explaining the data and offering some new insights into how new feminist materialist and posthuman thinking can help us to loosen the stranglehold of the binary subject positions of victim (the Sámi) and perpetrator (the Finns), which can obscure the qualitative multiplicity of inter-personal force relations as mapped through the interview quotes above. Indeed, through Aletta's speech we see oppressive force relations also among Sámi people, which can be seen operating as established ways of coping with the profoundly difficult life-and-death struggle (Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012) as the Sámi strove to keep their community alive in the face of enforced changes caused by cultural assimilation. This leads us to our second aim: to explore the more-than-human dynamics of ethnic discrimination. Throughout, by focusing on foregrounding objects and history of place in assemblages, we hope to have gestured towards the limits of a humanistic and individualised theorisation of ethnic-based discrimination, by opening up boarding school childhood experiences to the more-than-human: from the material to the discursive and semiotic and including the socio-historical and affective force relations of which assemblages are always entangled. Indeed, we argue that discrimination is not simply and solely located within the individual subjects, but emerges in configurations of force relations as material-discursive flows of forces, that include entanglements of discourses, places, materialities and embodied practices, attacking a person's identity, body, capabilities and desires to belong and be recognised as competent and legitimate members of communities.



Although the Sami appear to be in a uniquely positive situation in terms of health in comparison to many other indigenous peoples of the circumpolar area (Sjölander, 2011), the findings of this qualitative case study's theoretical and empirical examination of Sámi experiences of discrimination in Finnish boarding schools provides new insights into the underlying force relations that, when entangled, have the capacity to build a momentum and powerfully affect Sámi lives. Future studies employing this methodology are necessary to further develop the dialogue within academia about Sámi experiences in boarding schools in Finland and beyond to increase awareness of the magnitude of how those damaging experiences, not only situated in the past, re-appear in the present. These insights would constitute helpful evidence for the reconciliation processes in Finland for former attendees of Finnish boarding schools and their families, and may also have an impact on how holistic healing programs are designed for re-building Sámi identity.

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