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The Position and Identification of the Non-Status Sámi in the Marginal of Indigeneity

Erika Sarivaara^α, Satu Uusiautti^σ & Kaarina Määttä^ρ

Abstract - The concept of a Non-Status member of an indigenous people refers to a person who is Indigenous but does not have the status as an indigenous person. The indigenous status has often been lost after the adaptation of complicated legal rules resulting to a situation that is not equivalent with individuals' self-identification with an indigenous people. This article introduces the concept of Non-Status Sámi in the Finnish situation where some of the Sámi are excluded from the official definition of indigenous. This was a narrative study aiming at producing subjective knowledge about Sámi identity and experiences of it. Non-Status Sámi (N=10) were interviewed. The study took place in Finland which is one of the four countries inhabited by the Sámi. The study showed that the official definition of an indigenous people matters for the identity of an individual person. The purpose of this study was to increase information about the phenomenon and tear down stereotypes and myths about Sáminess.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on identification with an indigenous people by revealing the point of view of those who do not official meet the criteria of indigeneity. We start this discussion by talking about the indigenous people of Tasmania who were thought to be disappeared. However, there was a population in Tasmania whose members called themselves Aboriginal Tasmanians. They did not accept researchers' denial of their existence. Hence, these Tasmanians started to defend their rights in the mid-1970s (Crowley 1993; Smith 1999). Later on, the position and rights of indigenous peoples gained root at the world's political arenas and international agreements since the beginning of the 1990s when indigenous peoples were started to distinguish from minorities. Indigenous peoples' rights to collective possession of certain lands that were earlier colonized by majorities were admitted (Koivurova, 2010).

The definition of an indigenous status is an important one among the indigenous peoples. For example, indigenous peoples in Canada are legally defined by their bloodlines (Palmer, 2000). If one meets the criteria of indigeneity, one can for example have right to use lands and waters of the indigenous reservations. People of the reservation have been divided in two when considered from judicial point of view. Non-status Indians commonly refers to people who identify themselves as Indians but who are not

entitled to registration on the Indian Register pursuant to the Indian Act. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010; Cornet, 2003). In indigenous contexts, the term "non-status" refers to the drain of traditional rights. In some cases, their identification and talk about their indigeneity were considered a political idea and it resulted in discussion where people who were regarded as non-existent could not have claims concerning their existence: "Aboriginal individuals who are of Indian or First Nations ancestry and would so identify but do not have Indian Act status. In some cases, status has been lost through the complex application of legal rules that have not corresponded with individuals' identities." (Magnet et al., 2005, p. 180).

The phenomenon that occurred in Tasmania can also be found in the Sámi history of Finland, the context of this study. Generally researchers distinguish three Sámi groups in Finland: Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi, and Skolt Sámi (see Lehtola, 2012). Historically there is also Forest Sámi group in Finland, but as a result of language shift the Forest Sámi have generally been assumed extinct. For example, Finnish historian Helmer Tegengren's conclusion is evident already in the title of his book: *En utdöd lappkultur i Kemi Lappomark* [The extinct Lappish culture in Kemi area] (Tegengren, 1952). However, there is a population who live in the traditional area of the Forest Sámi and who consider themselves Sámi. The modern Forest Sáminess has been researched and according to results, some of the Forest Sámi identify themselves as the Sámi. Moreover, the research results suggest that the Forest Sámi culture and identity have been transferred from a generation to another although the Sámi language has disappeared from that particular area (Saarinen, 2011; Sarivaara, 2012).

Pursuant to the Finnish law on the Sámi Parliament, a person is considered a Sámi if he/she considers him/herself a Sámi and if (1) the person him/herself or at least of one parent or grandparent of his/hers has learned Sámi as the first language, or (2) the person is a descendant of someone who has been registered as a Fell, Forest or Fishing Sámi in the land, taxation or census register, or (3) at least one of his/her parents has or could have been registered as entitled to vote in the elections of the Sámi Delegation or the Sámi Parliament (Act on Sámi Parliament, 1995; adopted on 17 July 1995). The concept of Non-Status Indian (Magnet et al., 2005) lays the foundation for the study of the non-status Sámi. In this article, a group of people

within the Sámi society, which has been previously invisible in public, is introduced and defined. The members of this group are not included in the official statistics and they lack official status as Sámi because they do not fulfill the criteria of Sáminess. Consequently, the definition of Non-Status Sámi is based on two objective criteria that do not have emphasis on self-identification (Sarivaara, 2012): yet, at the individual level, rights to self-identification are stated: Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. No discrimination of any kind may arise from the exercise of such a right. (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at Article 9.).

The non-status Sámi includes people from almost all Sámi groups in Finland. Erika Sarivaara (2012) distinguishes the following groups that are categorized based on their cultural identity, language, and official status: First, the Sámi society comprises all the Sámi who fulfill the criteria of the official definition of a Sámi whether they know or do not know the Sámi language. Secondly, the Sámi society also contains the group of non-Sámi who know the Sámi language: this group, the "Lapps", can be located outside the Sámi community, because they strongly oppose the Sámi and do not know the Sámi language. Thirdly, there is the dominant population, that is the non-Sámi and who do not know the Sámi language, does not belong to the Sámi society. The fourth group is the non-status Sámi which is located within the Sámi society, because they speak Sámi and also because most of them work for the Sámi society but do not have the official Sámi status. The concept of the non-status Sámi can work as a useful tool when analyzing the relationship and position of the Sámi community and its relation to other groups. In this study, we analyzed the identification of the non-status Sámi with the Sámi community. This is important because the indigenous identity matters not only to the person himself or herself but also to the group and the society.

II. IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION WITH AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The aforementioned article in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Cobo's definition (Cobo, 1986) give indigenous peoples right to define those criteria based on which the members of the people are selected. On the other hand, according to (2012), "päättös siitä, kuka kuuluu tiettyyn alkuperäiskansaan, ei saa perustua mielivaltaan, vaan sen tulee perustua selkeisiin edellä mainittuihin tunnusmerkistöihin [the decision of who belongs to a certain indigenous people cannot be made wantonly but it must be based on clearly defined elements]" (Joona, 2012). According to Joona's view, decisions should be

reasoned, objective, and in accordance with the internationally recognized human rights (Joona, 2012).

UN special reporter José Martínez Cobo's (1986) report of indigenous peoples' exclusion complements the definition of indigenous peoples in the ILO number 169 convention. Cobo's definition covers indigenous peoples at the group and individual levels. According to the group level definition, those communities and peoples who have historical connection with the communities preceding colonization, who developed at the lands populated by these communities, and who consider themselves clearly separate from the parts of the dominating society are indigenous. Additionally, indigenous peoples are not in a dominant position in the modern society and they want to maintain, develop, and transfer the lands inherited from their ancestors and their ethnical identity that they share as a people and that is in harmony with their own cultural practices, social institutions, and legal systems (Cobo, 1986). Cobo also answers to the question of who can be defined as members of an indigenous people at the individual level.

The person must identify himself or herself as a member of an indigenous people (that is the subjective criterion) and the group has to recognize and accept the person as a member of the group (that is the objective criterion). Cobo emphasized the power of the group in this matter: the acceptance of the group includes the sovereign right to decide who belongs to the group without any need for outsiders' intervention (Cobo, 1986).

Basically, the concept of indigenous peoples is a construction created for international agreements within the global context. It can be adapted to certain peoples and communities in certain areas. The concept points out important common and topical social, cultural, and political questions that concern indigenous peoples. As a concept, it also is related to identity and identification processes. (Valkonen, 2009; Seurujärvi-Kari, 2012.).

At the moment, the purpose of the development of indigenous peoples' rights is to gain sovereignty (Koivurova, 2010). In addition, international agreements and declarations mean to secure indigenous peoples' rights and viability in their traditional domiciles. In September 2007, United Nation's general assembly agreed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration demands that members of the United Nations secure indigenous peoples' rights in their own cultures. Significantly, the declaration uses the plural form, "indigenous peoples". The case of using plural form has been debated ragingly in politics because the term is seen to refer to the collective human rights of indigenous peoples and especially to sovereignty.

At the individual level, the declaration demands rights to self-identification: "Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous

community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. No discrimination of any kind may arise from the exercise of such a right.” (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at Article 9.)

The concepts of Indigeneity, being Indigenous, and Indigenesness can be seen as a part of indigenous peoples’ ethno-political action that primarily pursues sovereignty in their traditional domiciles. Indigeneity can be interpreted as an identity that is constructed through ethno-policy and thus, indigenous peoples can use the concept to further their case at political arenas (Gegeo, 2001). According to Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005), “indigenesness is an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism” (p. 597).

The concept of indigeneity can also be discussed from the cultural point of view. In the post-colonial research literature, indigenous identity has been under wide interest and aroused discussion internationally (e.g., Battiste, 2000; Gleason, 1983; Griffiths, 1995/2006; Smith, 1999) and among Sámi researchers (e.g., Gaski, 2008; Hirvonen, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2006; Lehtola, 1999; Müller-Wille, 1971/1996; Seurujärvi-Kari, 2012; Stordahl, 2008; Valkonen, 2009; Åhrén, 2007).

Linda T. Smith (1999) points out that the indigenous identity is often connected with the demands on authenticity and essentialism. Smith continues that a person who belongs to an indigenous people and participates in political discussion often becomes distrusted of his or her authenticity (see also Henze & Davis, 1999). Discussion about authenticity is harmful especially to persons who belong to the marginal indigenous group, such as those whose “blood quantum” is “too white” or, for example, urbanized non-status Maori (Smith 1999, pp. 72–72).

According to the essentialist conception of a man, a human being is born with some specific characteristic (essentia). This pre-determined essence determines the direction in which human life develops and gives some model and destination to it. Essentialist thoughts and manners of speaking about “native” populations and the distinctions produced by these manners of speaking finally hark back to ideas of human races. When differences that are based on thoughts like this turn against some individuals or groups, we must talk about the differences and their consequences as manifestations of racism. When taken to the extremes, the essentialist conception of ethnicity leads to racism. Presenting characteristics as biological or otherwise unchangeable, “natural,” has always been a central strategy of racism that has used for justifying unequal treatment. Therefore, questioning of the theory of race has been one to the most salient aspirations of those who object racism and racist research. The fact that the human kind could be categorized into various races based on the biological characteristics and genotype

has been questioned already decades ago (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1952; Rothman, 2003; Unesco, 1969).

When analyzing the phenomenon from a wider perspective than just a matter of race, the identity formation appears multidimensional, even indefinite. Hall writes about the importance of contact zone in the development of an identity. He refers to the zone of uneven distribution of power developed through the interaction between colonizing and colonized cultures (Hall, 2003). Homi Bhabha (1996) and Lawrence Grossberg (1996) talk about an indermediate culture, “the third space” that describes action and identity development in the frontier zone of two cultures. The third space does not purely represent either of the two cultures or groups but seeking of one’s own place and creating new space in the frontier zone. Questions whether individuals are more this or that may direct them in the frontier zone and partly produce idea of marginal hybrid identity (Lehtonen et al., 2004).

Hybrid identities consist of historical and cultural fragments and irregularities rather than of consistencies. People cannot come back to their roots, the history of their relatives, and find the continuity in their selfhood through that. What they long for has already moved and cannot be reached as the same. Considered from this perspective, identities are in the space of coming and being. A salient question asked by Hall is not, therefore, “Who we really are?” It is “Who we, have become” (Hall, 1990; 1999; 2000). Hall describes the construction of a hybrid identity as a series of routes rather than coming back to one’s roots.

Riitta Kontio defines a hybrid as a descendant of indigenous people and settlers whose identification, for one reason or another, with the indigenous people or the dominant population has not succeeded. The result of the identity process is the construction of one’s own special national, linguistic, and ethnical identity (Kontio, 2003). Sanna Autto, Timo P. Karjalainen, and Leena Syrjälä studied the local identity, relationship with the nature, and politicized use of lands among people who live in northern Finland on the contact zone of the Sámi and the Finnish culture. They concluded that a Northern people’s identity cannot be analyzed without the concept of hybrid (Autto et al., 2009). Villagers discussed the experience of being located in the middle: The development of the culture of Lapland in the middle of two powerful traditions, the Sámi and the Finnish one, created an intermediate zone similar to paranoid schizophrenia where various tensions confronted” (Autto et al., 2009, p. 194).

The constructivist view sees identity as constantly renewing but not arbitrarily adjustable because it is also influenced by uncontrollable factors such as the acceptance of the community (Sarivaara, 2012). This limited adjustability results in a situation where people who have a vague or hybrid ethnical, social, or cultural identity can only partly have an

influence on their situation. For example, learning a language and using it changes both the person's own and outsiders' conception of the person's identity, but clearly within the limits set by the community (see Sarivaara, 2010; Sarivaara, 2012).

On one hand, creation of a certain kind of identity is connected with clarifying the hybrid identity and on the other hand with the eligibility of the identity. In name, the same "identity", for example Sáminess, can appear unwanted or despicable from one perspective and simultaneously eligible and appreciated from another perspective. From the constructivist point of view, the ambivalence of the identity shows the possible variation of the experienced identity and the possibility of self-awareness and self-education.

The discussion about Sáminess and especially the definition of Sáminess started in Finland in the 1990s after the draft law on the Sámi parliament was handed to the Finnish authorities. Also other laws on the Sámi's legal status were prepared at the same time (Lehtola, 2005). Erkki Pääkkönen studied the so-called Lapp dispute that he describes as the resistance movement started by the local mainstream population of the northern Finland in the 1990s (Pääkkönen, 2008). Based on the research and public debate, the view on the definition of an identity is partly based on the either-or juxtaposition. A certain dichotomy has stigmatized the discussion about Sáminess: the Sámi who meet the official criteria defined by the Sámi parliament forms one group whereas people who are located outside the official definition are considered outsiders, mostly Finns who belong to the dominant population.

On the other hand, identity can be defined as a versatile and dynamic phenomenon (Bhabha, 1994; Eikjok, 2000; Hall, 1990; Jenkins, 1996; Seurujärvi-Kari, 2012; Valkonen, 2009) when it is seen as a constructivist process that is constantly changed and constructed in various places and times (Hall, 1990). Furthermore, Maritta Stoor (1999) refers to an identity that is created through negotiations and renewal. Veli-Pekka Lehtola has studied the problems of the cultural encounter of the Finnish and Sámi cultures: he describes the Lapp identity formed in the borderline zone of the Sámi and Finnish cultures, which is a multicultural zone. Lehtola emphasizes that the emergence of a Lapp identity is based on the experience of the Sáminess as stigmatizing identity which caused the endeavor to build a new ethnical identity (Lehtola, 1997).

III. METHOD

The purpose of this study was to answer the question "Who am I?" by studying the identity of a certain group of people. The nature of the research participants, their historical background, and present situation make the foundation of a unique research setting. This study focused on a group of Sámi society who has revitalized the Sámi language although it has

not been spoken in their families for generations. Thus, they are not Sámi according to legislation. Here, the members of this group are called Non-Status Sámi. This article is based on Dr. Erika Sarivaara's (2012) doctoral research who herself, represents the group of the non-status Sámi.

This was a qualitative research with narrative approach (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993). Narrative research can be defined as research that utilizes or analyzes data that are collected via narratives (e.g. biographies) or other such ways (e.g. anthropologists' observational narratives, interviews). Thus, a narrative can be either a research object or a means to study a phenomenon (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Narrative research does not focus on objective and generalized facts but on local, personal, and subjective information—this is considered a strength of narrative research because informants' voices of can be heard authentically (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Narratives can also be used when analyzing the reasons for actions (see Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The study was done in cooperation with the research partners so that there was dialogue and exchange between the researcher and the participants: understanding and interpretation formed a continuous process, a hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1979). Such a process has the empowerment of the research partners as one of its main objectives. This study also aimed at empowerment through the researcher starting a process of change and encouraging the participants.

The data of this study comprised the interview data of ten people obtained in 2008–2009 in Finland. The interviewees were selected according to the three criteria used as a basis for the definition of Non-Status Sámi: they must know the Sámi language, they must have oral family knowledge about having Sámi ancestors, and they must not be considered Sámi under the official definition of Sáminess—that is, they must not be entitled to vote in the elections of the Sámi Parliament. In this study, they were considered researcher partners because they were not only passive informants but rather worked, to some extent, together with the researcher. In this way, the participants of the study benefit from studying each other.

In this research, identity is defined through social constructionism. Identity is always in an interaction relationship with the environment and reality is socially constructed through various meanings and interpretations (Berger & Luckmann, 1994). In social constructionism, identity is defined as identification in a certain objective world which an individual person can retell subjectively only through a connection with this world (Berger & Luckmann, 1975). The constructivist viewpoint is based on the idea of selfhood and identity being narratives by nature, phenomena that based on discourses. It means that the idea of man is anti-essentialist. In other words, in social constructionism, a

human being does not have essence that would determine who he or she is (Lehmuskoski, 2008). This idea of identity is based on symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1972) or social constructionism where the reality is produced through interaction between human beings (Berger & Luckmann, 1975).

In this study, a new perspective of the multidimensional Sámi identity is analyzed: the focus is directed in people who are located in this borderline zone and who are in danger of being ignored and denied. The following research questions were set for this study:

- (1) How do the Sámi-speaking non-status Sámi perceive their position in the Sámi community?
- (2) How do the Sámi-speaking non-status Sámi perceive their status?

The concept of hybrid identity seems to resemble the non-status Sámi's situation where the identification with Sáminess and the dominant population can be problematic (Ruotsala, 2002). In this study, the non-status Sámi are not considered half-breed or mixed. Therefore, the interview data do not provide answers to the research participants' specific backgrounds. The focus is on their Sámi roots and the meanings the roots have in their lives. Lähtenmäki (2004) calls Sámi descended people as mixed population since they have both Sámi and Finnish settlers' ancestors. Bloodline was seen as one of the areas in the approach applied in this study but not as the central one. According to Lähtenmäki (2004) identification as a member of a mixed population makes the Sáminess strongly politicized and sensitive (Lähtenmäki, 2004). We analyzeD the phenomenon, the identity of the northern people and related problems, in reflection to previous research (see e.g., Amft, 2002; Kramvig, 1999; Ruotsala, 2002; Stoor, 1999; Stordahl, 1997; Valkonen, 2009). The purpose is to contribute empowering and questioning discussion on Sáminess. In addition, the research provides a new perspective on the Sámi research paradigm introducing new information about Sáminess.

IV. RESULTS

a) 4 A. The Sámi-speaking non-status Sámi's position in the Sámi community

The research partners' experiences narrated in this study revealed that non-status position is a real problem without a solution. In order to survive in the borderline zone, they had developed various identity strategies because their goal was to live in a community which is a mixture of northerness, Sáminess, and Finnishness. The term "identity strategy" refers to a way one develops to survive in one's living environment (Lindgren, 2000). Living in such an environment requires flexibility:

And sometimes when you have a bad day, you think what you are. I haven't set any strict limits for

where I belong. There is perhaps a little bit of flexibility, too, when you don't define too strict limits. (Research Partner No. 1).

A few interviewees had identified with the Sáminess and the Sámi life style after having lived the Sámi environment despite the experiences of limited being. They seemed to have adjusted in the unclear situation and looked for solutions to survive. Every research partner had gone through the process of reflecting on their Sámi situation, clarifying their identity to themselves and to the community. Some of them said that the unclear situation did not bother them eventually. They had found a way of coping with the situation by learning about Sáminess in general and as their own characteristic. As a whole, the situation appeared ambivalent making people do soul-searching and contemplate differences, as the following research partner described:

Living in the influence of the local Sámi culture and community has strengthened my Sáminess. I perceive myself more Sámi and Finnish, so that I barely can communicate with someone from Helsinki [the capital city of Finland] but our ways of thinking are totally different. - - My sense of humor and the similar way of raising children, things, hobbies, and everything are more similar with the official Sámi people. (Research partner No. 10).

Based on the research data, the Canadian blood quantum principle could be recognized from the discussion of Sáminess. The various demands of being full-blooded can result in leaving the Sámi who have mixed with the Finns and other ethnic groups outside the Sámi debate because of their half-breed bloodline. Valkonen (2009) writes that a half-breed Sámi is less than a full-blooded Sámi because of the level of Sámi blood. She refers to considering Sáminess as a race which makes Sáminess a biological category, in other words blood quantum requirement in the Finnish situation. The ethnical definition of Sáminess can be made based on parentage but basically, Sáminess is about the sense of belonging, the Sámi identity (Valkonen, 2009).

The cultural identity does not measure the Sámi blood but refers to a person's identification from the cultural point of view. An individual person's self and social identities are constructed in relation to the culture and membership in that culture the person finds his or her own (Fornäs, 1998; Hall, 1987). This cultural identity is strongly connected with time and place, too (Mason, 2000), which means initially that the identity is constructed in a certain cultural community. Indeed, this study is about that cultural identity: Sáminess is defined through that culture the research partners' find their own.

The following quotation from the interview data reveals how the research partner contemplates Sáminess in relation to the acceptance by the official

Sámi. The research partner's public Sámi identity depends on whether the official Sámi accept him as a Sámi people or not. The research partner prefers recognition by the Sámi community over his or her own identification. He or she is very careful in his or her definition and sense of belonging. He or she waits for the official Sámi's reaction of his or her Sámi identity:

In Norway, people have asked me if I am Sámi and I have often said that I am a sort of seaguhuvvon, a half-breed with Finnish and Sámi blood. But mostly in Finland, I tell that I have some Sámi blood. But I guess I haven't told anyone that I'm Sámi but might tell that I am of Sámi descent, or from Lapland or Sámi people's descendant. ---I think that today people are careful of who can call themselves as Sámi. And after having learned the language and used that pretty much, I guess I think that if everybody else starts to call you [Sámi] then you could start calling yourself as a Sámi, too. But you don't necessarily want to be the first to say that you are Sámi. (Research Partner No. 1).

The aforementioned quotation shows the research partner's wish that since he has built the living connection with Sáminess, learned the Sámi language, and identified himself or herself as Sámi, the Sámi community accept him or her as a Sámi. The following data excerpt shows the conflicting emotions regarding the way the research partners talk about their Sáminess in public:

I have often said that I have Sámi ancestry but I don't belong to the Sámi electoral register. My answer and feelings vary daily. I don't know where else and to what other people I could belong to. --- I can't say aloud it [that I am Sámi]. It sounds like a declaration of war. A lot of confusion and disagreement is involved in this matter. (Research Partner No. 4).

The process of building an ethnic identity may include the phase of questioning one's ethnicity. The next narrative communicates the strong longing for the lost connection with the Sámi relatives and system. An essential part of Sáminess is to know one's family closely. The family defines Sáminess to a great extent, for example, the way the family Sámi dress is made and decorated. The lost family connection is a part of the non-status Sámi's experience of who they are and where they belong to. They find it hard not know all Sámi families because of the events that took place in the past:

At the moment, I am a half-caste.--- Sometimes, it bothers me a lot. It would be easy to be someone who knew in which village my relatives live and visit them. And then, it would a huge relief to be able to wear the Sámi coat. --- Then, I could tell everyone that I am their son. That would be just great. Then I didn't have to think that. It just that the family seems to be so important, at

least it seems like it is. You have even the third cousins in your wedding. Then, I didn't have to think about those things. (Research Partner No. 7).

b) 4 B. The Sámi-speaking non-status Sámi's perceptions of their status

During the past few decades, the Sámi definition has been widely discussed in public—and still is. Who are Sámi? How to define the limits of Sáminess and on what grounds? The public discussion has been versatile and several quarters have participated in it. The Sámi's position in the Finnish legislation was significantly improved when the Sámi had cultural sovereignty in their official Sámi Domicile Area in 1995. For this task, the Sámi elected the Sámi parliament (the realization of cultural sovereignty is defined in detail in the law of Sámi parliament) (Lehtola, 2005).

The law defined for the first time who can be considered ethnically Sámi and a member of this indigenous people (see the definition in Introduction). In order to be officially Sámi, a person must consider himself or herself Sámi which refers to the subjective criterion. In addition, the person must fulfill at least one of the three objective criteria that relate to (1) the Sámi language, (2) Lappishness, and (3) the Sámi parent(s).

Each of the research partners in this study knew the current definition well. Therefore, it seemed clear that they understood and realized the definition. In addition, everyone thought that a definition is necessary in order to be able to define who is a Sámi and who is not. Some of the interviewees had reflected on the matter profoundly and could make suggestions on how to revise the definition. A few interviewees found discussing the definition conflicting because they experienced negatively being excluded from the official definition of Sáminess.

It arouses anger and disappointment in me, and questioning of my identity. --- How do you define yourself? But that concerns your children too, how they define themselves? You are responsible for your children. So, this pain does not concern just us but the future generations, too. (Research Partner No. 4).

The research partners could also name positive aspects in their action: being a person who lives in and works for the Sámi community could make a positive resource in the Sámi decision-making. Both the non-status Sámi self and his or her community could benefit from a membership of a Sámi-speaking, active person.

Of course, when you act in the Sámi environment in all possible ways, you start asking why you can't vote in the Sámi parliament election. I think it's bad because people are not allowed to use all those possibilities they would otherwise have in that environment naturally. --- The limits are artificial and thus lousy. Because it also means that the strengths of those people who could give their contribution remain unused. (Research Partner No. 3).

One of the research partners was dissatisfied with the definition because it is unfair to those whose families have Finnishized earlier than two generations ago. The partner thought that it would be natural to perceive them as Sámi and questions his or her identity:

Have your grandparents spoken Sámi as their first language? That is quite a rough definition after the strong assimilation policy into the Finnish society generations ago because of which many have given up their Sámi family name, livelihood. --- Think about us, we were born here and grown here, become rooted here. This is our soul, even our blood, so where else could we belong to? What else could we be? (Research Partner No. 4).

Social acceptance appeared more important for some research partners than the official one. It was extremely significant that the Sámi community accepts a person as a member of the group, in other words as a Sámi, welcomes, and regards the person as us, the Sámi:

I know that definition. I think it is probably good but what is more important to me is how the community accepts me, instead of the official status. (Research Partner No. 10).

The next interviewee had not revealed his or her Sáminess yet. The metaphor he or she used illustrates the prejudiced attitude of the Sámi community toward the non-status Sámi:

I haven't come out from the closet yet. But I know that it's so windy that I prefer keeping the door shut. (Research Partner No. 4).

The multifaceted approach of this study to Sáminess is in many ways connected with being on the boundaries and exclusion, but in this case, also with belonging to the indigenous people. Therefore, the phenomenon appears versatile and complex. In this study, people who were excluded from the official definition had to re-define their identities in relation to people covered by the definition. Being located on the borderline zone can stir powerful emotions, such as disappointment and upset (Gürler, 2000).

V. DISCUSSION

The Sámi form a linguistic minority and indigenous people due to which already Sáminess itself represents marginal. Even the marginal has its marginals and the outmost boundaries. The concept of marginal is multifaceted because a person can belong to a marginal in one area of life but not in another one (Jokinen et al., 2004). This flexible state illustrates the way the research partners of this study were located in the Sámi community. From the juridical point of view, they belong to the marginal of Sáminess. But from the

cultural perspective, they are in the center of the Sámi culture as they are Sámi-speaking people.

According to Tanja Joonas (2012), the definition of an indigenous people as a group is not challenging as such, but at the individual level, it is more difficult to define who is indigenous and who is not. The core of the problem is the indigenous peoples' objectives to have their historical rights to land and waters returned. These special rights give reason to ask how to define subjects who are entitled to indigenous peoples' rights.

The non-status Sámi form a heterogeneous group: there are as many experiences, identities, and narratives as there are narrators. According to Erik Allardt and Christian Starck (1981), at the general level, populations consist of a core group who fulfill several criteria for the membership, and groups who are located in the middle of the majority and minority who does not fulfill all the criteria. This group can be such a group where the identification between the core group and the majority can form a continuum. This study discussed the questions of an indigenous identity and accepting someone as a member of an indigenous people. These two viewpoints do not always go in the same direction because of the diversity of identities and the power issues in the history. Furthermore, the Sámi culture is not static but multicultural and changing—it has been like that throughout the ages. The myth of Sáminess as stable and consisting of certain cultural features was created during decades. However, this myth has influenced dramatically on the non-status Sámi.

The definition of ethnicity affects feelings and therefore, it is significant to a human being's experience of existence. At its worst, those who have become excluded from the indigenous group have to live on edge. For example, in the 1980s, a suicidal wave among the Sámi youth happened in the village of Kaarasjoki. Among others Eikeland (2003) studied the chain of events and found several complex and overlapping reasons for these suicides, including the alienation from the Sámi culture and language.

The concept of an indigenous identity is a useful concept that provides an important viewpoint to a person's identification with a community. According to studies indigenous status confers recognition of identity (Eberts, 2010). Based on this study, indigeneity is connected to essentialism according to which the bloodline defines a person's identity. The demand on full-blood can lead to experiences of being in the borderline or between identity categories.

VI. CONCLUSION

The identity questions among indigenous peoples as presented in this study are quite common (see e.g., Corntassel, 2003; Ellinghouse, 2006; Field, 1994; Fleras, 1999; Gardiner & Bourke, 2000; Kukutai, 2010; Jung, 2003). In Nicaragua, the Rama Indians are

very strict who is a real Rama Indian, who is half-breed, and so on. Despite language revitalization, they represent so-called puritanical view on ethnicity (Satta, 2005). Likewise, according to Joyce Green (2011), “the very multiple nature of Métisness will impel more inclusive, less absolute frameworks for identity. The definition process may take time, as communities grapple with the consequences of the long history of state and settler societies telling us who we are not. After all, we know in our psyches, in our families, that we do not – cannot – choose ‘either/or’ identities and be true to all that shapes us.” Renisa Mawani (2009) argues that people with “mixed” heritages were stigmatized as biologically and culturally degenerate and deviant; the state sought to regulate authenticity and purity.

Perhaps, the future of indigenous peoples “does not lie in state handouts” as Li (2000, p. 24) points out after studied Indonesian indigenous peoples. And the group introduced here, the non-status Sámi, has taken one step further by revitalizing their Sámi language and actively learning about the Sámi culture with the purpose to live the culture and simultaneously keep it alive. However, the official definition does not consider them Sámi. Indeed, Schechter and Bailey (1997) conclude that linguistic minority populations, especially those whose language transmission is an issue which is the case among the Sámi, have to grapple with identity issues other groups might not have: “In their daily negotiations between dominant and minority cultures they confront questions of the discreteness and synthesis of linguistic code at many junctures and levels of self- and other-defining decision making” (p. 514).

This study discussed the problem of the debate over established definitional standards versus indigenous self-identification (see also Cornstassel, 2003) from the non-status Sámi’s point of view. The purpose was to question the dichotomy and to analyze whether the concept of non-status Sámi should be widened to cover also self-identification. Cultural identity is bound to a person’s experiential world and identity. Accepting that as a part of an indigenous people’s identity can be considered a step toward healthier community.

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