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The resurgence of Native American identity

A case study of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head
(Aquinnah)

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Abstract

This thesis explores the resurgence of Native American identity. Scholars have observed a dramatic increase of people identifying themselves as Native Americans over the past forty years in the decennial US Census. The increase coincides with the introduction of racial self-declaration in 1960; according to scholars this enables a process of ethnic switching where individuals change their race from non-Indian to Indian. This thesis is based on a study by Joane Nagel who explores this phenomenon and ascribes various characteristics to what she labels the “new” Indians. My choice of case is the Wampanoags who nicely fit these characteristics.

The question in this thesis is directly derived from Nagel’s study: “Who are these ‘new’ Indians?”. By conducting a case study, based on interviews, I work with a qualitative method in order to provide an answer to this question. I use the concept of ethnic identity in analysing the identity of the tribal members. The respondents’ answers show that the most salient factors in the ethnic identity are territoriality, culture (involving social life, relationship to nature and education of the young) and to a lesser degree history (as a source of inspiration).

The case also shows that race is not a significant factor in the make-up of the ethnic identity with tribal members.

Key words: Ethnic renewal, Ethnicity/Ethnic Identity, Native American, Martha’s Vineyard, Wampanoag

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1 Introduction

From the arrival of the white people in the New World in 1492 and for the following 450 years the indigenous people of North America, today known as Native Americans or American Indians¹, were in steady decline (almost close to eradication) (Snipp 1992:453f), but then something happened. It has clearly been identified that a resurgence of people identifying themselves as American Indians has taken place during the last 40 years. As scholars have shown, this rise can't be explained alone by births or rates of mortality, instead the rise has been ascribed to a process called "ethnic switching" (Nagel 1995:947). It has been clearly established that the dramatic changes in the number of American Indians are due to changes in ethnic classification (i.e. ethnic switching) (Eschbach 1992:638). However it seems to me that much of the focus in this academic field previously has been on the quantitative aspects of the resurgence (solely the amount of American Indians and how it can be explained) and in this essay I would like to highlight the qualitative aspect of this resurgence in the form of a case study of an actual tribe. I want to find out how the resurgence is actually displayed and expressed, so I therefore chose to undertake a descriptive case study of the resurgence in order to illustrate and exemplify it.

In Joane Nagel's splendid essay on the resurgence of American Indians she asks the question: Who are these "new" Indians? This question serves as my point of departure. The answer she provides isn't satisfactory enough according to me as she only, more or less, works with quantitative aspects derived from the census of 1990 in answering the question, although she uses the qualitative interview method in finding the answer to her second question "what motivates them [the new Indians] to change ethnicity". I'll work with this qualitative approach in order to describe and understand who these "new" Indians are, in other words I'll provide an answer to Nagel's first question with the method she used for her second question. As I will show, the case of my choice fits well with the description of the characteristics that Nagel ascribes to these "new" Indians.

The purpose and aim of my study is to give "life" and add more depth to the image of these "new" Indians as described by Nagel. I'll let them talk in their own words about who they are. As catchy it may sound I believe that the description of this phenomenon needs more flesh and bones to it. I firmly believe that my study can work as a compliment, by looking at a specific case and using a qualitative

¹ I use the terms American Indians and Native Americans interchangeably when referring to the descendents of aboriginal inhabitants of North America commonly known and referred to as Indians. This is consistent with the terminology applied by Nagel (1995), and by this I avoid involvement in the nomenclature debate on what to "label" an American Indian (cf. Horse 2005, King 2000, Weaver 2001).

approach. So in order to illustrate the resurgence of Native American identity, as displayed by the increasing numbers in the U.S Census, I have chosen to look at the Wampanoag tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).

1.1 Problem

My problem is directly derived from Nagel's study: Who are these "new" Indians? In order to find (or rather provide) an answer to this question, I have decided to look at issues concerning their identity in ethnic aspects. This is due to the fact that research has shown that ethnic identity constitutes an important part of the identity among Native Americans (Lysne and Levy 1997:373ff).

By interviewing members of the Wampanoag tribe I believe that I can receive a more in-depth and thorough understanding of their identity and the identity of the Native American as a whole. Some might object to the notion that the results from my study can be applied on to American Indians, especially the "new" Indians, as a group. However researchers assert that American Indians can be seen as an ethnic group. They've shown that one of the Native American's identities is a pan-Indian identity. This pan-Indian identity is said to unite the interests of American Indians "by virtue of their common heritage, independent of the social and political agendas of particular tribes" (Snipp 1992:360). This identity can be used outside reservations when interacting with "others", some argue that it developed after WWII when American Indians got increasingly involved in the political and economical life outside the reservations leading them to view themselves as minority group members of the larger American ethnic mosaic (Nagel 1995:950). Due to this I believe that my case study can work descriptively of Native Americans and specifically "new" Indians as a whole. I'll use the Wampanoag case as an illustration of the Native American resurgence; the Wampanoags will illustrate the ethnic group American Indians.

What makes this problem interesting in my mind, and obviously many other scholars', is the increase in people identifying themselves as American Indians that has taken place in the last 40 years. Before the US Census of 1960 it was the enumerators from the US Census Bureau that assigned race to the people based on observation. But from 1960 and onwards a system of racial self-identification was implemented (Snipp 1992:356, Eschbach 1993:640). Since this system started the number of Native Americans have grown remarkably, between 1960 and 1990 the number of people classifying themselves as Native Americans more than tripled (Nagel 1995:947). In 2000 the respondents were asked to report one or more races (thus acknowledging the multitude of identity) that they considered themselves belonging to. This marked a fundamental change in the measuring of race in the US (Harris and Sim 2002:614). The increase between 1990 and 2000 in people identifying themselves as "American Indian alone" increased by 516,722 (or 26 percent) to a total 2,475,956 and if measuring the aggregate classification, i.e. "American Indian alone" or in combination with another race the increase is 2.2 million (or 110 percent). As a comparison the total population of United States

grew with 13 percent, this indicates that the Native American resurgence is still underway, making my thesis relevant (Ogunwole 2002:2f.). As mentioned, research has clearly established that the abovementioned trend in increasing numbers of Native Americans can't be explained by changes in fertility or mortality, instead it should rather be ascribed to changes in self-identification and "ethnic switching" (See Nagel 1995, Eschbach 1993, Snipp 1992). Another interesting fact, described further in chapter 1.2.4, is the actual case of the Gay Head (Aquinnah) Wampanoag concerning the difference between the number of enrolled tribal members and the number of people identifying themselves as Gay Head (Aquinnah) Wampanoag in the last US Census of 2000.

1.2 Theory

In this theory chapter I will present some of the theoretical prerequisites and assumptions underlying Nagel's and, of course, my study. This makes this theoretical chapter pretty long, however I believe that clarity is crucial when working with these types of questions. I try to show as explicitly as possible what the results are based on in order to increase intersubjectivity. I'll start with some basic notions about the social constructionist approach, as it's fundamental for my study. I'll then have a discussion on the concept of ethnicity/ethnic identity, as it's this aspect that I want to "catch" in this essay through my interviews. As I build my argument, and choice of case, on the notions and characteristics of the "new" Indians, as proposed by Nagel, I'll therefore present the theory and tools (as ethnic renewal) that Nagel used to identify these main characteristics. This leads up to my point of departure; the main characteristics of the "new" Indians. Finally I argue for the appropriateness of my choice of case.

1.2.1 The character of identity

Identities have three specific characteristics according to Petersson: they're changeable, multidimensional, and context dependent (2003:36ff). Identities aren't fixed attributes; instead they're representations of continuous processes. The multidimensionality is displayed through the various identities a person holds e.g. father, husband, Swede, soccer player etc. The multidimensionality is associated with the third characteristic, that identities are realized in context and especially in a social one. A person can feel much more Swedish when he's outside Sweden than he's when in Sweden (ibid). This view of identities is consistent with the social constructionist conception of identity as a process and the recognition of the multitude and overlapping of identities (Kinnvall 2003:12). The essence is that identities are social constructions. The fact that identities have these characteristics, which means that a full recollection of individuals' collective identities during a given period isn't possible, has led me to focus on a ethnic identity (Petersson 2003:39). It has been maintained that identity, as mentioned, is

composed of several components or content specific identities e.g. ethnicity². It's the ethnic identity that is interesting in my study as research have shown that ethnic identity and ethnicity have a prominent role among Native Americans (Lysne and Levy 1997:373ff).

1.2.2 Ethnic identity/Ethnicity

Nagel uses a social constructionist approach when dealing with ethnic identities. She builds her theoretical frame on the work by anthropologist Fredrik Barth. Barth showed how ethnicity is situational and variable and thus stressed the socially constructed character of ethnicity (Nagel 1995:948). This is called the situational approach, where ethnicity is seen as a product of particular economic, political, and social conditions. The situational approach argues that ethnicity is "an adaptive identity which is determined by, or may vary with, the context in which an individual finds himself or herself and thus the attitudes which one has towards a particular set of circumstances" (Davies 1996:82). In this case ethnic identity is something voluntaristic rather than enforced as a primordialist would argue. Barth rejected the primordial notion of ethnic groups having a permanent and fixed biological and cultural character, instead ethnicity is to be viewed as a dynamic form of social organization (ibid 82f.). Lysne and Levy presents, through the work of many scholars, the following definition of ethnic identity: "a multidimensional and dynamic construct which focuses on individuals' knowledge and beliefs about belonging to a particular group (Lysne and Levy 1997:373).

I here present a combined (Nagel, Barth, and Davies) notion of ethnicity in order to provide an explicit picture of the concept ethnicity/ethnic identity, as many authors often tend to forget this in my opinion. "Ethnicity is the condition of belonging to an ethnic group, it's the sense of ethnic identity felt by the members of an ethnic community" as defined by Davies (1996:80). Ethnicity provides us with a sense of belonging and a way of knowing who we are (ibid 87). According to Barth is the ethnic group defined in relation to other groups, through social boundaries in which inter-ethnic relations are conducted. These boundaries are maintained, demarcated and constructed through a constant interaction and contrast between us and them. The social boundary "is taken to mean a vessel which may encompass varying or symbolic elements at different times – language, history, territoriality, economic factors" (ibid 83). This means "there is constant flux at the edges of individual ethnic identity and ethnic group boundaries" (Nagel 1995:949).

Further more ethnicity is seen and defined as a broad concept, subsuming race (which refers to physical and visible distinctions) and contains, besides physical differences, differences in language, religion, or culture (ibid 947). It's worth

² In this work I'll view the terms ethnicity and ethnic identity as synonymous and use them interchangeably as many other scholars have done (Nagel 1995:948, Davies 1996:82).

noting that some scholars argue that it's the other way around, referring to race as the broader concept (Lone-Knapp 2000:635). The most important aspects of ethnicity, according to me after reviewing the different sources, are then those constituting the social boundary (language, history, territoriality, and economic factors), race, and culture. To conclude the concept of ethnicity; studies have shown that ethnicity is more emergent than primordial, ethnic group boundaries are fluid, ethnic history and culture is routinely revised and sometimes even invented. This shows, in the words of Nagel, the "central essence of ethnicity – ethnic identity- to be multifaceted, negotiable, and changeable" (1995:948).

1.2.3 Ethnic switching and renewal

The changeability feature of the ethnic identity is what allows for the process of "ethnic switching". This is defined as "where individuals who identified their race as non-Indian in an earlier census switched to Indian race in a later census" (ibid). Racial boundaries are fluid, today membership in a racial category is the outcome of the social process of identification. Race is no longer a fixed attribute and a simple exogenous variable, it's determined (in part) by social context and characteristics. Racial identity involves a choice for many Indians and there has been a considerable flux in the choices made since 1960 (Eschbach *et al* 1998:35).

As argued, the increase of Native Americans during the last 40 years can be explained by ethnic renewal. This is both an individual and a collective process. Individual ethnic renewal "occurs when an individual acquires or asserts a new ethnic identity by reclaiming a discarded identity, replacing or amending an identity in an existing ethnic repertoire, or filling a personal ethnic void". Collective ethnic renewal "involves the reconstruction of an ethnic community by current or new community members who build or rebuild institutions, culture, history and traditions" (ibid). Ethnic change is not a new phenomenon, sociologists have for a long time identified forms of ethnic change associated with intergroup contacts. However in the case of ethnic renewal the individuals adopt a nondominant ethnic identity as opposed to previously observed ethnic change where individuals were absorbed into a larger dominant ethnicity (ibid 948f.). An example of ethnic change is 'passing', which means the hiding or camouflaging of a disadvantageous ethnicity while adopting the dress and/or behavior of a more advantaged group (ibid 949). The Native Americans exemplify this, during the last century powerful incentives prompted persons of a mixed background (due to intermarriage) to discard, conceal, or omit their Native American background. However this changed dramatically after 1960 as we have seen (Snipp 1992:357). This dramatic change is then explained by ethnic renewal.

1.2.4 The "new" Indians

It was Steiner who in 1967 came up with the term "new Indians", referring to them as urban, educated, and multicultural. According to Eschbach the increasing

number of Native Americans is largely due to what he calls “‘new identification’ by Americans of varying degrees of Indian ancestry who formerly reported a non-Indian race, but who changed their race to Indian in a later census” (quoted in Nagel 1995:951). Nagel concludes that researchers agree that individual ethnic change is an important factor in the growth but she still wonders who these new Indians are, that is the question she tries to answer in her article and the results of her research will follow down below.

Before I account for the characteristics of the “new” Indians I want to discuss the concept of labeling someone “new”. Noteworthy are the “” in the term “new” Indian, this indicates that there really isn’t anything new about these people that are being labeled “new”. It could be that earlier their Native American identity might not have been as salient as it is now. A person that a scholar labels “new” might not agree at all with that label as he or she maybe always has thought of himself/herself as an American Indian but to varying degrees, he or she maybe put another identity ahead of the American Indian one (e.g. African American ahead of American Indian) or the fact that previous Census’ allowed only for one race to be specified hindered multiple classification.

The main characteristics of the “new” Indians are, as proposed by Nagel: (1) they are much more likely to live in urban areas than rural, (2) they are much more likely to be from states with historically small Indian populations, (3) they are more likely to be intermarried, (4) they’re less likely to assign their mixed offspring an Indian race, and (5) they are quite likely to speak only English (Nagel 1995:951ff.). Other research backs up these findings (see Snipp1992, Eschbach 1992, Eschbach *et al* 1998). It’s also widely held among these scholars that American Indian ethnic (and racial identity which is subsumed in ethnic identity) identity is a matter of choice (Nagel 1995, Eschbach *et al* 1998), it’s this choice that enables “ethnic switching”.

I believe that the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) matches several notions of the “new” Indians (For a more thorough description of the tribe see chapter 3). First of all only 68 of the tribe’s 1099 (number in March 2006) enrolled members live on tribal lands (Wamp. 1) and most of the tribal members that live off the reservation live in urban areas (Respondent WP 5), they live in the state of Massachusetts where Native Americans make up 0,6 percent of the population (Ogunwole 2002:5), they have very high rates of intermarriage (early reports from 1861 on the people at Gay Head labeled them as “a mixture of the red, white and black races” Woodson 1920:48, cf. Mandell 1998). Though it’s hard to prove the 4th characteristic, it might be argued that the difference between the number of enrolled tribal members and the number of people identifying themselves as Wampanoags (see next paragraph) might be explained as a difference in how the offspring conceive their ethnic and racial identity: the offspring’s ethnic identity is Wampanoag (as they’re members of the tribe) however their racial identity (which is subsumed to ethnic identity) is non-Indian. This duality is possible as race is just one part of the ethnic concept, due to the fact that the Wampanoags are so intermarried and mixed, the race factor (as it’s heterogeneous) might not be a highly prominent factor in the collective Wampanoag identity such as perhaps culture. This is however just my own,

personal speculations and the analysis will see if I'm right or wrong. The final characteristic observed by Nagel regarding language is true for the Wampanoag case, the Wôpanâak language (the native language of the Wampanoags) has been extinct since the 1800s and even though a revitalization project started in 1993 the tribal members speak English (MITLI).

In arguing that the Wampanoag case is an interesting and good choice I also look at the latest Census Data from the year 2000. It shows that 513 persons identified themselves as Gay Head (Aquinnah) Wampanoag (Census 1), either alone or in combination with another race, however the tribe had an enrollment number of 959 members in 2000 (DW). By March 2006 the enrolled number was 1099 (Wamp. 1). This difference indicates that a large number of the tribal members don't specify themselves as American Indians when it comes to race even though they're members of the tribe. This could be interpreted as that the tribe is undergoing the process of ethnic renewal. However it could further mean that the number of tribe members will increase significantly by the next US Census as more members would identify themselves (in racial and ethnic terms) as American Indians if the resurgence of Native America identity continues as it has for the past 40 years, making the tribe a nice example of individual and collective ethnic renewal. With a stronger sense of ethnic identity a person's racial classification might change to the one of the current social context (e.g. the tribe), i.e. a case of ethnic switching. This could possibly illustrate and/or be interpreted as ethnic renewal.

A final argument for considering the Wampanoags as interesting for this study is that they didn't receive federal recognition as an Indian tribe until 1987 (which means you're acknowledged as a sovereign nation) thus making the tribe fairly "new" (in juridical terms) (Wamp. 1, cf. d'Hautesserre 1998 on the importance of federal recognition for tribes in the eastern US).

1.3 Method

As mentioned I've chosen to conduct a case study of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) that is based on interviews undertaken during a fieldtrip. This is to be considered a qualitative method (Devine 2002:197). The main reason for choosing the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) is that I believe, as shown, the tribe fits well in with the different arguments and notions about the "new" Indians that are presented in Nagel's study. As I intend to answer the question regarding who these "new" Indians are my case study can be classified as a descriptive one. A descriptive case study's purpose is to exemplify and illustrate a phenomenon (e.g. the increasing numbers of people classifying themselves as American Indians and who they really are) (Lundahl and Skärvad 1999:187).

According to Petersson (2001:35) do personal interviews constitute "an indispensable method of social science research" when studying identities and phenomena related to identities. Personal interviews are also to prefer when the

questions are of a more complex character and there might be a need of repeating and explaining the questions. To avoid misunderstandings and linguistic difficulties, as well as getting more thorough answers to “open” questions (when there are no set answer alternatives) the personal interview format is superior (Esaiasson *et al* 2003:262). In my questionnaire I have chosen to partly structure the questions, this due to several factors. In an “all open-ended” interview there is minimal, if no, steering of the interview from the interviewer, this could lead to that the only information made available by the respondent is such information he or she voluntarily discloses (this could mean that some subjects face the risk of being avoided) (Essed 1997:134). The all open-ended interview, as argued by Heradstveit, also runs the risk ‘of posing leading questions and coming up with distorted perceptions of what has been said’ (in Petersson 1998:46). Close ended questions are, as argued by Putnam in Petersson (2001:35f.), ‘fatally flawed as instruments for understanding basic beliefs and values’. Furthermore it’s argued that it’s not meaningful to study identities through fully fixed questions as this doesn’t allow any room for flexibility in regards to the questionnaire. In order to be able to consider the changeability, multidimensionality, and context dependency of identities you need an instrument that allows for adjustment. If you work with a fully fixed questionnaire this is not possible (Petersson 2003:44). Holme and Solvang have a terrific quote by Galtung to illustrate the problem of open versus close ended questions: ‘The danger of too much flexibility are just as obvious as the truth in the argument that to give everybody shoes of size 8 is to give the same thing to everybody, yet with different effect’ (Holme and Solvang 1996:99).

Petersson (2003:44) recommends structured, but adjustable and flexible personal interviews. He claims that it’s a responsibility of the researcher to structure the interview (*ibid*). He used this semi-structured method for his extensive study of identities in Russia (Petersson 2001) and it’s this method I’ll use as well as I consider it to be very appropriate in accordance with the objectives of my study. In the semi-structured method certain central questions are formulated on beforehand, related to specific topics and themes, but the interviewer is able follow up with questions relevant for the specific situation (Lundahl and Skärvad 1999:116, Petersson 2001:36). This structure allows respondents to “elaborate on proximate themes that they deem to be of relevance for the discussed themes” (Petersson 2001:42). Another strength of this format is its possibilities to “uncover a diversity of relevant responses...” (Merton quoted in *ibid* 36). As a matter of fact the “the fundamental principle of interviewing is to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms” (Patton quoted in *ibid* 35). I believe that the semi-structured form does this, hence my choice.

1.4 Material

The material consists of personal interviews the author conducted in April 2006 on location at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. The respondents were members of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) of various ages and gender. The selection of the respondents (i.e. the material) was in the shape of quota selection, in an effort to be proportionate of the tribe population (Holme & Solvang 1996:183). When working with the interview method the selection of "units" must be conducted in some form of systematic manner, in this case the criterion are age and gender besides the obvious criteria of tribal membership. The researcher should try to have such a wide variation in the selection as possible as this provides him or her with a greater amount of information (ibid 101, 104).

The number of respondents totaled ten (roughly 1 % of the tribal members) with the youngest one being born in 1990 and the oldest one in 1926. They were all tribal members, with varying backgrounds and racial features. Although I would have liked see more males in the study (3 out of 10) the circumstances didn't allow for this, however I don't see why a person's ethnic identity would be significantly different because of the person's sex. I would also liked to have more members in the age bracket 20-30 years, however it turned out that many tribal members that age move off the island after High School as there is no university or college on the island, or in the search for job opportunities. All of the respondents were promised anonymity to increase participation in the study. Therefore the respondents' names are coded and the only information disclosed is age, date of interview and sex. See Appendix 1 for a list of the respondents. Additional material used in this study are secondary sources consisting of articles from academic journals and literature.

The method chosen for this study means that the answers (i.e. the actual material) provided by the respondents have been assembled and interpreted by the author (Petersson 2003:44). The personal interview doesn't offer an objective or neutral way to finding out the respondents inner thoughts and perceptions, however this is to be considered a prerequisite not a drawback in this type of work (ibid 52). I believe that there's no objective reality to be uncovered and the results of the interviews, which will be presented further on, are the results of my interaction with the respondent and my interpretations of their answers. Noteworthy is that the author's perspective on the meeting with the respondents is the only thing researchers of identity reliably can provide. That this is the way it should be is well-argued by Petersson in his study of Russia (ibid 42,44f, Petersson 2001:40-42). The results will be presented in both quantitative form (pure numerical information) as well as in qualitative form in the shape of quotes to illustrate and convey that the respondents took part in developing the arguments presented in this paper (ibid 42).

2 The Wampanoag case

2.1 The Wampanoags of Gay Head (Aquinnah)

“Mitark, the last hereditary chief, summoned the people on the Indianhill at sunset and told them that he was going to die, and while he spoke a white whale rose above the water in Witch Pond and Mitark said that this is a sign that another new people with the whale’s color [shall come] but don’t let them get all the land as in that case the Indians will disappear. Then he died and shortly thereafter the white people arrived.”

Recorded by Gladys Tantaquidgeon among the Gay Head Wampanoags in 1928 (as quoted in Wilson 1998:99, author’s translation from Swedish to English).

The “modern” history of the Wampanoag of Gay Head (Aquinnah) starts with the arrival of the Englishman Thomas Mayhew Sr. in 1641. There had been steady contact, mostly due to trade, during the early 1600s between the English and the Wampanoags but they often led to violence resulting in the abduction of Indians and retaliation from the Wampanoags. This, among with the English having their hands full on the mainland, led to Martha’s Vineyard remaining uncolonized until the 1640s (Silverman 2005:4). It was with the acquisition of some land in the eastern portion of the island from a sachem named Tawanquatuck by Thomas Mayhew Sr. in 1641 that colonization would start. The year after his son, Thomas Mayhew Jr., arrived with slightly less than one hundred colonists to settle the island. Jr. was a preacher (a puritan) and started with his mission to convert people almost immediately (ibid 17).

By 1645 two epidemics had swept the island killing about half of the 3000 Wampanoags at the time of arrival. These events shook the Indians world and opened them to the influences of missionaries and Christianity as they were trying to search for order in their world. By 1674 all but one of some 300 families were reported to be Christian (ibid 23ff. 72). Along with the Christian influence the Wampanoags started to lose their land at an alarming rate and by the early 1800s most of them didn’t know their native tongue (ibid chapter 5,6). Around the beginning of the 1800s, due to a shortage of Wampanoag men, many Indian women were forced to marry outsiders (of whom many were African Americans). According to statistics from Aquinnah in 1811 only 5 percent of the males (12 persons) were “full blood” Indian while the majority were of mixed descent (ibid

231) and in 1820 some argued that there were no Indians of “pure blood” left (ibid 234). This lack of “purity” would eventually lead to white people arguing for what they saw as the protected status of the Indians to be revoked (as they now didn’t consider them to be Indians).

In June of 1869 the Massachusetts state legislature declared that all the Indians in Massachusetts were “to be declared citizens of the [Massachusetts] commonwealth” (they were now no longer legally Indians) which meant that the Indian lands now could be sold to non-Indians (Plane and Button 1993:587, 591). This led to tribal lands decreasing over the forthcoming 100 years as tribal members sold off land, due to various reasons (e.g. debt) and in 1870 Gay Head was incorporated as a town, ending its status as an Indian district. In order to promote self-determination and receive federal recognition of the tribe (as the recognition as Indians was lost in 1869) they formed “Wampanoag Tribal Council of Gay Head, Inc.” in 1972 (Wamp. 2.). In 1987 the tribe received their federal recognition from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and were then once again considered Indians. A settlement act with the state the same year gave the tribe 485 acres of land on which the tribal housing is situated today (ibid). In 1998 the name of Gay Head was reverted to the old Wampanoag name of Aquinnah.

2.2 Martha’s Vineyard

The island of Martha’s Vineyard, or Noepe as called by the Wampanoags, is located about 8 kilometers south of Cape Cod in the state of Massachusetts. It’s about the size of the island Öland. The tribal lands are located on the Western portion of the island and consist primarily of wetlands, due to this and archeological findings only 98 out of the tribe’s 485 acres are developable (Wamp.1).

Picture 1. Location of Martha’s Vineyard. ”Massachusetts” By: TYPOFORM/Marie Peterson
Source: Nationalencyklopedin, http://www.ne.se/jsp/search/article.jsp?i_art_id=252207



3 Dimensions of the analysis of the Wampanoag identity

As presented in the theory chapter, the most salient aspects of ethnic identity are those constituting the social boundary (language, history, territoriality, and economic factors), race, and culture. As the tribe hasn't had a fluent speaker of their own language for almost 200 years and they all speak English I have decided to leave the language factor out of this analysis as I believe that it can't possibly be a major force in constituting the social boundary. There are also practical reasons (the amount of text) to this choice and it enables me to focus on what I believe to be more relevant aspects of the ethnic identity.

In developing my interview questions and asking myself questions on what I should ask to have a fruitful study I have sought inspiration in the analysis scheme provided by Petersson (2001) in his study regarding Russia. However I have modified it to suit the specific needs of my study just as Petersson modified and elaborated on the salient components specified in the national self-image (which is a partial representation of a national identity) by Kaplowitz: 'what a people likes and dislikes about itself, how it views its history, the resultant 'lessons' it has learned, its aspirations and desires, the ways in which it may want to change, its conceptions of national purpose and interest, and its perceptions of its powers and limits' (Kaplowitz 1990 quoted in Petersson 2001:20).

I regard ethnic identity as a partial representation of identity (p.4) and I find the abovementioned account useful as an inspirational source when developing my own analytic scheme. According to Preston are memory (in the shape of history), locale, and networks the three cornerstones in the make-up of collective identities (1997:43). In my analysis of the ethnic identity the focus will be on the first two. When designing the questions I want to incorporate the salient aspects of ethnic identity (those constituting the social boundary, race, and culture). This means that these are the areas that I want to touch on in my questions, and hopefully the respondents' answers will deal with these aspects. I will, as influenced by Petersson (2001), build my questions, and analytic scheme, around two main dimensions: a temporal and a spatial one (In my study I use the broader notion of locale instead of territoriality when referring to the label "spatial dimension")(22ff.). As I believe some of the aspects to be intertwined, e.g. history and contemporary society, I will sometimes formulate the questions to depict this intertwined character and thus kill two birds with one stone.

3.1 The temporal dimension

The temporal dimension; which involves the past, the present, and the future is important for the identity. Especially the past dimension is important, it's seen as the most prominent one within the temporal dimension (Petersson 2001:25). According to Karlsson are there two historical dimensions of identity: (1) identities are shaped by historical development itself, they're merely vague reflections of political regimes, social systems and cultural processes and (2) by using history from within, a certain individual or collective identity can be established or supported (1996:11). It's even said that history is "the centerpiece of identity" (Cohen quoted in Petersson 2001:21). At both the individual and collective level is the past dimension absolutely crucial, as it's argued that the recollections of a golden age compromise the glue of an identity's affective dimension (Petersson 2001:21). Preston argues that the memory points to the ways and processes practical activities get deposited residues in memory, which provides the basis for ideas of continuity. Memory comprises a storage of knowledge and experience to inform future activity (1997:43) (In this case memory can be interpreted as broader view of history). In other words, the past provides points of departure and guidance for the future and present (Petersson 2001:21ff.). As a matter of fact the predominance of the past in the temporal dimension is so vast that "it is even justified to use the term 'past dimension' throughout [the analysis] when referring to the temporal dimension" (ibid 21).

Obviously the inclusion of a temporal dimension with a focus on history is essential to me. Under this broad dimension the salient aspects of the Native American ethnic identity can be viewed and I firmly believe that there are many fascinating views on the different aspects, in a historical light. As I believe the past dimension to be of such importance, the temporal dimension part will consist of historical issues. The present dimension of the temporal dimension will be a part of the spatial discussion as the present plays a relevant role in the spatial and they therefore overlap (ibid 25). Questions regarding the future will also be in the spatial section, as Petersson has shown it's been proven natural to deal with future aspects when studying the spatial dimension (2001:26)

3.2 The spatial dimension

What differs my spatial dimension from the one used by Petersson is that I use the notion of locale, which isn't solely compromised of territoriality (however it's still central). I believe that I have to use the locale notion as it it's more fitting in my attempt to catch the essentials of the Native American identity and it enables me to integrate aspects of ethnicity such as culture in the analytic schema within the spatial dimension.

In Preston's words locale means: "The notion of locale points to the immediate sphere of practical activities within which we move. It will be ordered around a set of routine practices, it will involve a series of a familiar and regularly used locations, it will involve a specific group of people again routinely seen. It will involve a taken for granted, yet richly known, background, a place." (1997:43). Within this notion you can interestingly fit territorial, cultural and lingual issues as I see it, in order to understand the concept of practices etc. Historically the construction of collective identities has been closely tied with place. The definition of we has been a question of where the persons (the "we") are in the world. However there has been a rupture in this trend, and I believe that by using Preston's notion of locale instead of territoriality I adhere to a new trend; today social place is increasingly getting detached from physical place (Scholte 1996:43f.). A sign off this could possibly be the pan-Indian identity and activism that emerged during the Red Power era³.

³ The Red Power movement was a civil rights movement inspired by the Black Power movement that stimulated Indian ethnic pride and consciousness. One of its most famous moments is the 19 months long occupation of Alcatraz (Nagel 1995:958f.).

4 Empirical analysis of the Wampanoag Identity

4.1 Temporal: On History

Interview question # 1: What periods, if any, in the history of the Wampanoag make you feel particularly proud? How can they serve as sources of inspiration, i.e. what lessons can be learned from them?

Table 1. History

Periods of Pride	Responses
Time of Pilgrims arrival	4
Today	3
Can't choose one period/the whole time since arrival	3
1950s – still maintaining local power	2
1970s – start of fight for federal recognition	1
King Philips War	1
1987 – Federal recognition	1
Participation in World Wars	1

The reason for the number of responses being higher than the number of respondents is because some respondents mentioned several periods while others only mentioned one. The period most associated with pride was the arrival of the Pilgrims, it was how they were treated with hospitality by the Wampanoags that made the respondents feel proud. The Wampanoags were the people who helped the Pilgrims on the Mayflower to escape starvation by providing them with food and teaching them how to survive in the New World. This is what today is referred to as Thanksgiving (Wilson 1991). As WP 6 said “We accepted them, helped them to settle and survive”. The lesson to be learned here, according to the same respondent, was “the basic acceptance of people”. The hospitality influenced the way WP 8 acted as she believed that “what people did [then], I can do it too”. For an outsider it can seem a bit odd, or ironic, that the acts that would eventually lead to the Wampanoags downfall would be the period most associated with pride. One respondent, WP 2, observed this fact and referred to this period as both one of pride and shame. The lessons to learn according to WP 2 were “we know now what history can do... We're more aware of things that can help us and hinder us”.

WP 2 thought it was hard to even choose one period as there has been a struggle over the last 400 years, but she was proud of the fact that “we’re still here, we’ll continue to be here, and our great great grandchildren will be here”. WP 4 said that he was proud of the Wampanoag throughout history as they managed to persist in this area. He talked of the importance of understanding the sacrifices his ancestors made and how they adopted to survive: “I take inspiration from that [sacrifice], that’s why I don’t move away. It keeps me here”.

WP 5 talked about the pride of today, how children get involved in different tribal activities such as pow-wows (a social gathering with singing and dancing) and embrace their roots. WP 3 was also very proud of the contemporary period and also pointed to the children as the factor, arguing that the kids in the tribe were very proud of their heritage and she really emphasized the importance of teaching kids today that it’s ok to be different for a 15 or 16 year old. She also related this to the pride she felt over the time period around the 1950s when the tribe had more local decision power. She talked about that today’s young people don’t know (that the Wampanoags used to be in charge at the town council), they have never seen “we can take care of our own business” therefore it’s very important to remind them of this period: “they have to know their capability”.

An interesting aspect is that only two respondents mentioned periods of war as a moment of pride. WP 7 argued that the high number of participants of members from the community in the WWI and WWII made her feel very proud and this would “teach youth that you should fight for your country”. Her reference to the United States as her country indicates the multiplicity of identity as she later referred to herself as Native American and Portuguese. WP 5 referred to the period called King Philip’s War (1675-1676), in which the native people of southern New England fought a war of resistance, led by a Wampanoag, against the English, as a moment of pride. But in overall the main notions of pride were related to more “positive” (my personal opinion) attributes than war.

My interpretation of many of the answers regarding lessons to be learned is that the periods should serve as guidelines on how the young should act today and sources of empowerment for the young. This goes along the lines of the reasoning (section 3.1, page 13) by both Peterson and Preston on how the past provides guidance for and informs future activity. WP 9’s comments on how the acts of the ancestors could inform the tribe and young people today exemplify this: “Keeping with the ideals that are part of Native American culture”. When asked to specify the ideals the answer was clear “being true to morals, yourself, respect earth, family and elders”. It also shows how the past and the present (and also the future) are closely connected in the temporal dimension. The present (e.g. how a young tribal member acts) seems to be explained by the past in many instances. At least in theory, an example of this could be the hospitality aspect which would be explained by the Pilgrim arrival in the long run.

Some final comments on the history section include the fact that the second (tied) most popular answer was “today” which could indicate that history isn’t one of the most salient aspects in the ethnic identity of the Wampanoag. The rather diverse and broad range of answers on periods of pride further implies this in my view.

4.2 Spatial: On Territoriality

Interview question # 2: What do the tribal lands mean and represent to you?

Table 2. Territoriality

Importance of tribal lands	Responses (N=10)
Very Important	8
Some Importance	2
Not Important	0

The table clearly shows the importance of territory and what it means to the tribal members. I want to point out that the members had a very varying background in their relation to the tribal lands. Some of them were born and had lived all their lives on the lands, some had lived there for a few years while some didn't even live there. Even so the strong relationship to the land is almost unanimous.

WP 1 referred to the tribal lands as “an anchor for the Wampanoag”. She felt that they represented an anchor as, whether or not the economy goes up and down, they were never to be sold and would always remain with the tribe. WP 3 gave a short but informative answer on her feelings towards the tribal lands “Everything!”. WP 2, who only lived there part time, had a bit of difficult time explaining the importance, because it was so obvious, as “it’s just home”. Both she and WP 3 talked about the connection with ancestors when explaining the strong sense to the land. “You know your ancestors walked, lived, died and were buried on this land...without the land we [the tribe] would not have that cohesiveness that we feel” (WP 2). WP 4 discussed how the ancestors were a part of land, how the tribe was created on the lands and how the intimate relationship between the tribe and the land was “an organic thing”. To WP 4 the tribe and the lands are “almost inseparable”.

WP 8, who grew up not even knowing about the tribal lands (as she had lived in a major city on the mainland growing up), said that the lands represented home and the culture of the tribe. WP 9, who didn't live on the tribal lands, felt they gave “a sense of home and belonging” and that it was a place “where you want to be and stay”. For WP 6 the lands represent both a victory (in cultural and historical terms) as the tribe still inhabited the land (“We’re still here”) but also a reminder of pain and suffering. The respondent compared today's rather small area to the vast territory of the pre-colonial past, controlling southeastern Massachusetts and parts of Rhode Island, and it reminded of the losses. One person that didn't ascribe the land as much importance as the other respondents, at least expressed, was WP 10 whose comment on the issue was that the land was mostly wetlands, and unusable, but “at least we got some back”. The meaning of the land didn't seem to be as strong to him as for the previous respondents. This is interesting as he was born and brought up on the island, however he had lived most of his life off the island. The other respondent, WP 5, who also didn't seem

to profess the same importance of the lands also brought up the issue of the lands poor quality, because they're wetlands. However she also mentioned that they had some importance as she concluded that "there is a reason why I'm here on this land".

That the tribal lands have a great meaning to the tribal members seem pretty clear by the above account. As mentioned in section 3.2, historically the construction of identities was tied to where we are in the world and place. At first this seems correct in this case but I believe that drawing that conclusion without looking at other aspects of the ethnic identity is premature and irresponsible. Yes, the Wampanoags have a strong relation to their tribal lands but is this the most salient aspect of their identity or what role does it play? We can't know that before looking at other issues as well. That's why I think that Preston's notion of locale fits well in to this study as it incorporates other aspects in relation to territory.

4.3 Spatial: On Culture

Interview question # 3: What do you consider to be the main characteristics of Wampanoag society? Do you believe they differ from the surrounding society? If so, how?

Table 3. Culture

Main Characteristics	Responses
Social structure/ties	10
Sustainability/relation to nature	5
Hard working	2
Perseverance	2
Fishing/Whaling	2
Education	1
Hospitality	1

Even though the respondents mentioned several different characteristics the one main characteristic was the social structure/social ties within the tribe according to the respondents. All of the ten respondents mentioned this as a defining characteristic of the tribe in one way or another. The notion of "social structure/ties" needs further exploration as it is a bit diffuse. This is where I believe one of the strengths with my method of choice comes into play as it allows for the respondents to explain and elaborate on what they mean and I can display it through quotations. WP 1 argued that the social structure (defined as the close bonds within the tribe in her opinion) was the one main characteristic and difference between the Wampanoags and the surrounding dominant society. She mentioned social gatherings, such as pot luck dinners, as an example on how social life was very important. WP 5 also brought up the pot luck social dinners as a distinguishing trait.

WP 2 resembled the tribe to a small family with a lot of disagreements but “when it comes to the outside against a tribe member we come together”. She believed that “the whites stick together on issue, for reason, the Wampanoag stick together for existence”. She explained the cohesiveness in the group when facing the outside as a result of the knowledge that “we know we’re all related”. WP 4 talked about “the concept of giving and supporting [for each other in the tribe]” as a distinguishing trait, he exemplified that by telling how the tribal members took care of children in need of help instead of sending them to social workers. When the surrounding society took contact with the social department, the Wampanoags let families, if possible, help out. WP 7’s answer on the main characteristic exemplify the emphasis on social life: “I see Wampanoag people together, having functions together. We come together, talk and share stories”. WP 8 was very clear on the difference toward the surrounding society “We care more about people and culture”.

Another distinguishing trait, according to many respondents, was sustainability, the relation with nature. This was often pointed out as the major difference between the tribe and the surrounding society. WP 6 expressed concern over the large houses and swimming pools built on their ancestral land by outsiders, how they “tear up the land”. WP 4 talked of the importance to maintain a relationship with the land, “they [the others] are not rooted, not bound to the land. They are almost nomadic. The tribe is like an extended family, people that aren’t rooted don’t have that.”. WP 3 felt very strong about the ongoing situation (rich people coming to the island and buying and developing property), “they eat up our land [on the construction of swimming pools]”. She asked me, rhetorically, “How does anyone justify digging up the ground for a swimming pool?...explain to me about their trophy homes”. WP 3 summed up the general perception of difference by arguing that today the area was being inhabited “with people that are invested here instead of vested”.

The general pattern that emerged was the emphasis on social life and structure primarily, and secondarily the relationship to the land. It seems that it’s the social life and their social ties that keep the group together. An interesting aspect is that only one respondent (WP 8) mentioned hospitality as a main characteristic of the contemporary society when the hospitality aspect in the historical perspective (the greeting of the Pilgrims) was the number one period of pride and inspiration (see section 4.1). Maybe the hospitality feature isn’t that prominent today due to the differences, observed by the tribal members, between the tribe and the surrounding society. It also seems that one of the major forces strengthening and keeping the tribe together is the threat from the “other”, when discussing the relationship to the land most of the respondents almost immediately measured their relation against the surrounding society as to exemplify their own, strong, relationship. It could be so that the perceived maltreatment of the land has led to the demise of the hospitality. I believe the words from WP 3 add some validity to these speculations: “I believe that they [people from the surrounding society] came to Aquinnah because we left it rustic, undestroyed” (WP 3), and now she was very disappointed of the behavior (digging up the land etc.) by the people

who came and called it “disrespectful” and stated that “the dominant society can be very demeaning”.

Once again I think that Preston’s notion of locale can be applied, when Preston talks about how the “immediate sphere of practical activities” is ordered around “a set of routine practices” I believe that the Wampanoag characteristics of social ties, gatherings etc. along with the concept of sustainability and caring for the land can be viewed as the routine practices of the Wampanoag.

4.4 Spatial: On Race and Recognition

Interview question # 4: What role, if any, does race play in your self-image and identity? What effect, if any, did the federal recognition have on you in terms of self-image?

Table 4. Race and Recognition

Role of Race	Responses (N=10)
Very Important	3
Important to some extent	0
Not Important	6
Decline to answer	1

The pattern that emerges is that the majority of the respondents do not consider race to be a salient part of their identity. This would imply that race doesn’t play a major role in the ethnic identity of the Wampanoags. The reason put forward by most of the respondents was that race, due to the wide mix and variety of tribal members in racial terms that 400 years of intermarriage brought, can’t be a defining factor of being a Wampanoag. For WP 1 it was rather to carry on and continuing the culture that was important, more so than race. She believed that in the end “it’s what you affiliate with”. WP 3’s initial comment was “I don’t even think about it... we’re a rainbow of people”, she talked about her growing up and being amazed seeing an all white family on a TV-show, growing up she hadn’t realized that you could have just a black or white family. WP 6 didn’t consider race as a big factor, he identified himself as Wampanoag and believed that it was the views and ways of life that were the determinants. This line of reasoning echoed in WP 7’s answer “Other people tell me I’m white. It’s not the skin color, it’s the way you feel and act”. WP 7’s notion that it’s what you feel together with WP 1’s comment “it’s what you affiliate with” can be viewed in the light of the argument put forward by Nagel as well as Eschbach on page 6 that American Indian ethnic and racial identity is a matter of choice (the basis for ethnic switching). WP 4 explained the tribal setup as “we’re every different color...the one thing in common [between tribal members] is being Wampanoag”. The answers indicate that being Wampanoag isn’t about race, by looking at the

answers from the other questions being Wampanoag might being part of a social life, having a connection to the land etc. but not a certain racial fixture.

One that did report race playing a large role in the identity was WP 5, who grew up as an African-American and still was very proud of being African American, as her mother was African-American she said she would never desert her (by renouncing that heritage). However she explained that today she loves every part of her heritage: Dutch, African-American and Native American. Could the case of WP 5 serve as an example of individual ethnic renewal? If we look at the definition of individual ethnic renewal (see page 5) it seems pretty clear that WP 5 has amended her ethnic repertoire.

A reason for not elaborating to a significant degree on the second issue of federal recognition was the unanimous answer received from all the members on the importance of recognition in terms of self-image: “None”. Either the respondents said something along the lines of “I already knew who I was” (WP 3, WP 4) or they didn’t know about it at the time (WP 5). For the younger people who weren’t born at the time the question was rephrased to “What effect do you think federal recognition has on you in terms of self-image?”. The answers all went along the “no importance” line here as well. WP 7 said that the only important usage for it, in terms of identity, was that if people question and claiming you’re not an Indian you can give them a straight answer and cite a specific tribe.

It seems pretty clear by these responses that the federal recognition doesn’t play any role (at least of noticeable significance) in terms of the resurgence, as the other responses show the sense of belonging seems to lie in the social structure, territory and relation to nature and not in government approval. The only really interesting insight this question provided was the clear rejection of the importance of federal recognition, beforehand I might have thought that federal recognition would play some kind of role in making the identity “acceptable” or so but this proved not to be the case. Besides this discovery, the dismissal of federal recognition as a factor, I believe the question didn’t provide any real interesting insights regarding the ethnic identity of the Wampanoag. Therefore I have chosen not to elaborate further more on this issue.

4.5 Spatial: On Future

Interview question # 5: What are the most important issues ahead for the Wampanoag?

Table 5. Future issues

Important issues	Responses
Educating children and community	7
Economic development	4
Maintain culture	4
Work together/Respect each other	3
Environmental sustainability	2
Provide housing	2
Protect sovereignty	1
Educating the others	1

Here the pattern from 4.3, that emphasized the social aspects, can once again be seen as the focus is on educating, primarily the children and to a lesser degree the community, the tribal members in culture, history and traditions. WP 6 highlighted the importance of educating and teaching the community and children in cultural, historical issues and values of being Wampanoag. WP 3 talked about the importance of “making sure to teach the children what we are not, what other people say we are. Our children must understand [what we are and were] not get lost in cowboys and Indians.”. She expressed a concern that today’s youth would believe their ancestors were like the Indians they see in Hollywood blockbusters, therefore it was important that it was the tribe who taught the young and not the outsiders. WP 2 also talked about the importance of the revitalization of the Wôpanâak language and teaching it to the young to get “the grandchildren to get that sense who they are”. WP 8 wanted more educating of each other in the tribe, both to preserve the culture but also as a mean to work together.

The general argument that occurred in the discussions on the future was that in order for the tribe to survive and remain as well as to maintain its character the young needed to be educated in culture, traditions etc. as it’s the young people who will carry on the traditions in the 21st century. An interesting aspect on this was brought forward by WP 4 who believed that housing was the key to it all “Housing comes first, all the other will follow that”. He explained it as if the people were to live together the culture would be able to be maintained and in this environment people would be able to take care of and educate each other. I found it interesting that even the youngest respondent (born in 1990), that most people would consider a child herself, talked about how “We need to teach the children more about culture, oral stories, dance and singing...teach the importance of

being Native American”. That the Wampanoags believe the future faith of the tribe lies with their youth is no understatement, and the way the youth will keep the Wampanoag tribe alive is through the culture not by race.

The second most popular response, economic development, is interconnected with the education as the general argument for economic development was to ensure the continuing existence and development (both in a cultural aspect as well as basic needs such as health care) of the tribe. “We need to find ways, through economic development, of taking care of our people” (WP 4). WP 10 pointed to the importance of becoming self-sufficient (today the tribe receives funding from the federal government), he proposed setting up a casino or slot machines (a hotly debated topic in New England today): “Regardless of us having one, people will spend it [money]. It’s better they spend it with us”. Economic development could provide funds for the education of the tribal members, just as the money that the tribe started receiving after federal recognition “helped to solidify the self-image” (WP 4).

WP 5 believed it was important for the future that “tribal members should be more respectful of each other...they should embrace differences in other people in the tribe. Members should help instead of stepping on each other, especially the one’s that aren’t as well off”. This quote reveals that the tribe might not be such a cohesive group as it might seem at first glance. WP 9’s answer when asked the most important issued ahead add to the debate on probable inner tensions: “Unity, working as a team. Having the same views on what’s going. There are a lot of arguments in the tribe that need to be solved”. These are just my own personal speculations but the focus on educating the young could hail from today’s disagreements, today’s and the (possible) future effort on building a strong intragroup feeling might eventually lead to a more cohesive tribe and this might be the desire behind the respondents’ focus on education.

It’s interesting that the members don’t talk about maintaining control over the tribal land as a major issue, why this is so isn’t clear. Is it that they don’t consider it to be threatened or is it that it doesn’t play that much significance? Based on the answers in 4.2 I would say that the former probably is the more accurate answer to that question. That the tribal lands have a major importance was clear, but only one respondent (WP 3) spoke on the importance of protecting the tribe’s sovereignty. She used the current debate on whether or not some nature reserves (where Native Americans live) in Alaska should be opened up for oil drilling (as proposed by the Bush administration) thus forcing the Natives off their land.

Even though some tribal members expressed concern over the different wills within the tribe this question provided a very interesting insight as seven out of ten respondents mentioned education as a top priority. The insight this question provided in terms of ethnic identity is the salience of culture in the ethnic identity of the Wampanoag. The focus on education shows how this is a prominent and highly valued aspect of the Wampanoag identity, according to themselves. The economic factors (a factor constituting the social boundary) also proved to be interconnected, if not subsumed, to the culture aspect.

5 Concluding discussion

So who are these “new” Indians? I hope that my thesis has provided some insights into the minds and issues of the contemporary society of Native Americans. Hopefully the reader of this thesis gets a sense of what it’s like being a Native American in the United States today. As mentioned the road taken in this thesis was to study the tribe from the ethnic identity perspective as ethnicity has shown to be an important part of the identity among Native Americans. First of all I want mention a good example of the situational ethnicity, a cornerstone in my thesis. WP 5 told me about her growing up as an African American, not knowing about the struggle for recognition etc. and it wasn’t until her late 30s she moved out the reservation. Today she sees herself as an African American AND a Wampanoag. This is to me a real life example on individual ethnic renewal and of how situational ethnicity works in practice. WP 2 explained the duality of the Wampanoag identity: “We live in two worlds”. Even though race didn’t play a salient role in the ethnic identity the tribal members acknowledged their mixed and multifaceted background and heritage. It was due to this multiple racial character (once again confirming the multidimensional character of identity) race didn’t play a salient aspect as the members all, almost, had their own racial makeup. Race couldn’t then be the determinant of being Wampanoag according to the members.

In doing my research I was looking for the most salient aspects of the ethnic identity. What I found was surprising in some aspects and not surprising in others. A surprising aspect was that it seems there isn’t really a recollection of a golden age among the tribe. On the contrary to the theoretical notions the “glue” is, if not missing, very weak. The top mentioned historic period was mentioned by a minority of the respondents, and the respondents responses were very spread out. This doesn’t have to mean that the temporal dimension doesn’t have importance because the temporal dimension mattered, however there is no sign of real cohesiveness. All tribal members acknowledged the importance of history, especially as source of inspiration for present and future behavior which confirms the notion of the historical importance laid forward by Preston and Petersson. Preston’s notion on memory, how knowledge and experiences inform future activity, is definitely applicable and visible here. In sum, the history was rather, in the words of Petersson, a provider of “points of departure and guidance for the future and present” instead of a provider of “glue”. I think that Karlsson’s first notion on the historical dimension of identity is the most accurate one; the Wampanoag identity seems to be clearly shaped by the historical development since the arrival of the colonialists (the contact with colonialists, the intermarriage etc.) more than using the history from within. However this might be developing with the focus on educating the young.

A major aspect of the tribe's ethnic identity was territoriality. As my research shows, the vast majority of the respondents ascribed the tribal lands significant importance. To claim that territoriality is a salient aspect of the Wampanoag ethnic identity seems accurate to me. Scholte spoke about social place being increasingly detached from physical place. I don't claim the two to be completely detached, they're increasingly being detached, so even if the tribal members still assign great importance to the land itself an undertone of the social importance of the lands (such as this is where the housing is located, which enables the group to live together etc.) could be observed. To some, one of the things that made the lands important was what they did for social life, as WP 8 said "Everybody knows you there". Historically collective identities and their construction was closely tied to place but as only 68 members (of 1099) live on the reservation and 513 assigned Gay Head (Aquinnah) Wampanoag as race to themselves it seems pretty obvious that it's something more than the physical whereabouts of a person that's constructing the collective identity of the Wampanoag.

Preston's notion of locale as a major building stone can be applied to the spatial dimension of the Wampanoag identity and incorporate the most salient aspects in the ethnic identity. "It will be ordered around a set of routine practices (culture, sustainability), it will involve a series of a familiar and regularly used locations (the tribal lands), it will involve a specific group of people (the tribal members, once again focus on the social) again routinely seen. It will involve a taken for granted, yet richly known, background, a place (even though there isn't a golden age I interpret the diverse responses on history as a richly known background).

As disclosed, a major part of the ethnic identity within the tribe was the cultural aspect. The two main characteristics were: social life (in terms of gatherings, taking care of each other, singing, dancing etc.) which all respondents brought up and secondly the relationship to nature. The salience of the culture factor within the ethnic identity also displayed in the question regarding future, as a majority brought up the desire and need of educating the young in the tribe's culture and traditions. The economic factor was also mentioned for the first, and only, time in the discussion on future issues as tribal members saw a need for economic development. Even though it was the second most popular response on the future issues it was never mentioned in any other issues, of course there wasn't any specific questions on economy but the topic never surfaced in any discussion. Also the economic development sought by those who gave that answer was intended for purposes of culture (education, social life) rather than strictly financial and monetary reasons. This makes me believe that economic factors aren't a salient aspect in the ethnic identity of the Wampanoags. This discovery was interesting as many of the members of the dominant society I ran into during my stay at the island only talked about the Indians in terms of economic factors, and believed that the economic factor was the only reason behind the resurgence of Native American identity.

In sum, the salient factors of the Wampanoag ethnic identity, and in the longer run the ethnic identity of the "new" Indians are territoriality, culture (involving social life, relationship to nature and education of the young) and to a lesser extent

history (as a source of inspiration). I believe that the future focus, if implemented, on educating the young can be the tool of a collective ethnic renewal within the tribe. Along the lines of a continuing renewal maybe the number of enrolled tribal members will equal the numbers of the next Census in 2010. For future research it would be a very interesting topic to see the responses on the same questions as well as if there is equilibrium between the number of enrolled members and members according to the Census. When applying Barth's view that ethnicity is socially constructed on to the case some interesting notions arise. The tribe's focus on the social aspects of culture and the importance of educating the children could be a conscious, or unconscious, way (from the tribe) of shaping or creating a Wampanoag ethnicity with the young (Similar to Karlsson's history from within). Being Wampanoag is something the children must learn socially, one of the reasons would be that they can't tell that by looking in the mirror. The socially constructed character of ethnicity and the importance if it is evident in this case.

Some final thoughts in regards to what woke my initial interest on the subject, the US Census figures, are that the US Census needs to be remodeled if it's looking for accuracy. The difference in the enrolled number of tribal members (959 in 2000) and the number of members according to the Census (513) shows the problem. Some members called themselves African-American but they are also members of the tribe and consider themselves Native Americans. The major thing my research disclosed (according to me) is that being a Wampanoag isn't about a race, it's about culture and this feature will always produce a discrepancy in the number of Native Americans according to the Census and according to the tribe. This means that the number of 'new' Indians actually could be much higher as people might identify themselves as Native Americans, e.g. through tribal enrollment, but report a different racial declaration as race isn't a salient aspect in their ethnic identity and that they believe that race hasn't nothing to do with whether you are a Wampanoag (or some other tribe) or not. I feel that the thought of "culture above race" is one of the major characteristics of the 'new' Indians. And it is this characteristic that enables the ethnic switching and renewal, thus making it the key to resurgence of Native American identity.

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Appendix 1. The Respondents

WP 1: Female, Born 1960, Interview date 2006-04-04

WP 2: Female, Age “in my sixties” (declined to give year of birth), Interview date 2006-04-06

WP 3: Female, Born 1945, Interview date 2006-04-06

WP 4: Male, Born 1974, Interview date 2006-04-06

WP 5: Female, Born 1956, Interview date 2006-04-07

WP 6: Male, Born 1988, Interview date 2006-04-10

WP 7: Female, Born 1990, Interview date 2006-04-10

WP 8: Female, Born 1989, Interview date 2006-04-11

WP 9: Female, Born 1989, Interview date 2006-04-11

WP 10: Male, Born 1926, Interview date 2006-04-13