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Rules of Recognition: Indigenous Encounters with Society and the State

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**RULES OF RECOGNITION:
INDIGENOUS ENCOUNTERS WITH SOCIETY AND THE STATE**

A Dissertation Presented by

by

ERICA E. KOWSZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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Anthropology

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INDIGENOUS ENCOUNTERS WITH SOCIETY AND THE STATE

A Dissertation Presented

by

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DEDICATION

For Hunter, helped me to not lose myself in this work and who brought so much joy,
curiosity, and comfort to the process.

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There are many people without whose involvement this project would not have been possible. Especially notable among the many who helped in big and small ways are Sonya Atalay and Rae Gould for the US side of the project and Else Grete Broderstad and Camilla Brattland, who facilitated my first stint as a visiting researcher at the Centre for Sami Studies at UiT The Arctic University of Norway in 2016. In Tromsø, I encountered a collegial environment that reignited my belief in this project at junctures over the years. Among those I met at UiT whose support and dialog have been indispensable to me are Else Grete Broderstad, Kajsa Kemi Gjerpe, Kristin Evju, Velina Ninkova, Torjer Olsen, Hildegunn Bruland, Eva Josefesen, Jennifer Hayes, and Eva Maria Fjellheim. Thanks are also due Thomas Hylland Eriksen for hosting me at the Social Anthropology Institute at the University of Oslo in 2017–2019. There, I count myself fortunate to have been the office mate of Heid Jernstad and to have met Lena Gross, who so often offered a place to stay on trips to Oslo and whose keen anthropological intellect, kindness, and sense of humor are a rare combination in just one person. Among those I met in Oslo who helped me along the road to this dissertation, whether they knew it or not, were my friends from Norwegian language courses in the city. In particular, I would like to name Alma Habaal, who shared with me her own hard-won insights into the management of social difference in Norway and who often reminded me to laugh.

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ABSTRACT

RULES OF RECOGNITION: INDIGENOUS ENCOUNTERS WITH SOCIETY AND THE STATE

MAY 2022

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For Indigenous peoples, being recognized has come to mean not simply being known and acknowledged by one's own relations but also being seen in the right way by the eye of authority. For decades, to gain access to the resources, rights, and legitimacy that state recognition confers, Indigenous political actors globally have navigated bureaucratic processes, from court proceedings to paperwork petitions. While the notion of Indigenous rights emerged at a global scale, they are specified in national jurisdictions. Indigenous people confront problems of their recognizability at all scales in their everyday lives and where they engage with state processes determining who counts as Indigenous for the purpose of the state.

This dissertation centers on an analysis of the relationship between these legal models of Indigeneity and the sociohistoric models of identity that guide readings of Indigenous people's identities in everyday life. In order to begin to account for the multiplicity of Indigenous experience, I examine two quite different cases of Indigenous recognition: the stories of Sami people in Norway and Nipmuc people in the northeastern United States. Both these groups actively pursued forms of state recognition beginning in

the 1960s. Distinct policies conveying recognition to Indigenous groups were introduced in both Norway and the US in 1970s and 1980s, seeming to create a parallel between the two histories. However, the two cases have diverged dramatically over the decades. Sami engagements with the Norwegian state translated into new laws, institutions, and even a constitutional amendment within a decade while Nipmucs spent forty years in pursuit of federal acknowledgment, ultimately without success. Contemporary ethnographic research in these two contexts reveals crucial differences in how non-Indigenous publics perceive Indigenous actors and their identities today. In this dissertation, I examine how the fixing of definitional criteria in law and policy co-exists with the ongoing circulation and transformation of the social models of identity that inform how Indigenous people are perceived in their broader lives, beyond their formal interactions with the state.

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NOTE ON TERMS

A number of the terms I use in this dissertation merit an explanation for why I use particular conventions of spelling or capitalization, where multiple possibilities exist.

Indigenous versus indigenous, and related terms: In this dissertation, I most often capitalize the word Indigenous. When I do so, I am using the word to refer to Indigenous peoples according to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) definition from the 1970s, in which Indigeneity is a product of a particular history with colonization and contemporary realities related to living within a state that Indigenous people do not control, located on their home territories. In the instances in which I use “indigenous,” without capitalization, I do so to make clear that the historical period I am talking about involves original peoples before the onset of colonial relations that can be described using the term as the WCIP defined it. Capitalization of “Indigenous” also follows with the norms described in Younging (2018), which, though his guidelines are specific to the Canadian context, include number of points that apply to the US as well. I follow his guideline on avoiding use of the word “Indian.” I do use the term where it is part of a specific term in US federal policy and in the name of historical documents or quotes from historical persons. One place where I diverge from Younging (2018) is in the use of the word “tribe.” Though this term does have a problematic history, it is also widely used among my Nipmuc interlocutors and it is a critical term in the federal acknowledgment process. Already, during the 1970s the term merited critique and historical examination (Fried 1975). That

has not ceased to be the case in the years since (see Younging 2018). I only use “band” where it is used in other documents or to explain government categorizations.

Hassanamisco: I use this name for the location of the Nipmuc Nation reservation at Grafton, Massachusetts, following Gould (2010), whose inquiry focuses on that place. Hassanamesit, the name of the historical Praying Town at the same location, was used by some interlocutors to refer to the same location today. I use Hassanamisco to refer to the place today and Hassanamesit to refer to the 17th and 18th century Praying Town.

New England: Throughout the dissertation I often use the moniker “New England” to refers to the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. As I describe in the historical background on the Nipmuc case, I use this name because of the way the legacy of English colonization still shapes life in the region today. In many ways, the region remains a colonial space. This is a different choice than some other authors writing on Indigenous topics who prefer Northeast or Dawnland or even Indigenous names for the region. These names deemphasize the colonial society and reinscribe Indigenous presence in the region (in the case of the latter name), valuable contribution for many projects and for our collective conception of the region. However, because this dissertation focuses to an important extent on the particularities of the dominant society that Indigenous people in the region confront, I use New England.

Nipmuc: I use this spelling of Nipmuc, which is used in most of the recent scholarship I cite (e.g., Gould 2010, 2013; Gould et al. 2020; Doughton 1997, and others). It is also the spelling used by Nipmuc Nation, which of the contemporary Nipmuc political formations (some of which use the spelling “Nipmuck”) is the one that is most central to this dissertation. Also note that this dissertation was written prior to the decision of the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band to leave the Nipmuc Nation organization and Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council, Inc., as announced in an open letter in February 2022 (see Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band Council 2022).

Personal names/historical figures: The name Zara CiscoeBrough is spelled differently in different sources account and documents. In this dissertation, I use the spelling used by Gould (2010) in her account focused on the Ciscoe family and homestead.

Recognition: I use the word “recognition” in multiple senses in this text. These are disambiguated in the Introduction. However, it bear remarking at the beginning that the most important distinction is between the use of the term to refer to a formal status assigned by governments to particular Indigenous peoples (related to the use of the word in international law to refer to the recognition of another nation’s sovereignty) and the more general senses in which the word “recognition” can be used. These include the use of the word to refer to the sense that one is seeing again something already familiar from prior experience, the realization of something’s nature or that it fits in an already-understood category,

or the social acknowledgment of a status or distinction (as in the recognition of an individual with a prize or a title).

Sami and Sápmi: I follow Anaya (2011) in using the term Sami for the noun and adjective forms to name and describe Sami people and practices in English. I follow his example in using Sápmi, with the accent, for Sami homelands.

Sami Act: I use the English translation of *sameloven* (the short name for *Lov om Sametinget og andre samiske rettsforhold*) throughout this text, though I have cited the Norwegian original in the bibliography. An English translation of the law is also readily available on the webpage of the Regjering (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2007), though this version does not fully reflect slight changes to the text of the law, which can be found in the Norwegian language original on the Lovdata website (Lov om Sametinget og andre samiske rettsforhold 2021).

NOTE ON LANGUAGE

In this dissertation I use a number of terms in Norwegian and some in Sami languages. I also use select terms from Algonkian languages. All of these terms or quotes are presented in italics and I have included the language they come from along with the English translation parenthetically, where it is not already clear from context or earlier use. These are primarily instances where I use the same word, which has no English equivalent, repeatedly throughout the text (e.g., *bunad* in Norwegian or *gákti* in North Sami, each of which refers to a form of traditional dress).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Social life is animated by acts of recognition—moments in which someone communicates: “I understand—I see you,” in acknowledgment of a position held in common. Such acts of recognition are important to every person. They help us forge a sense of self, a sense of belonging, and our way in the world. For Indigenous peoples, however, “being recognized” has come to mean more than being acknowledged socially by others. For Indigenous peoples, “being recognized” has come to mean being seen in the right way by the eye of authority. Indigenous peoples have long confronted unique conditions related to social and political recognition. Since the beginnings of colonial projects, Indigenous peoples have navigated their own social recognizability as Indigenous people. In many cases, Indigenous people have occupied a unique inside-outside position in the social and political order of colonial states, maintaining their own forms of social and political organization even as they engage, willingly or not, with colonial powers.

These dynamics are longstanding, but “recognition” only became a keyword in Indigenous activism and in state discourse much more recently, beginning in the 1960s. During the final decades of the 20th century, many different national jurisdictions implemented legal and regulatory measures intended to acknowledge Indigenous peoples as groups with a special status within particular nation states. Such measures generally involved the inscription in law (or regulatory texts) of explicit criteria to determine who counts as an Indigenous person or group for the purposes of the state. Policies created in the name of recognition purport to simply deliver factual determinations about already

existing realities. However, their impacts—decades later—have proven to be less straightforward than anticipated.

Experiences of outside evaluation and resulting recognition (or denial of recognition) have become a part of Indigenous experience in many corners of the globe. Today, and for at least five decades now, recognition contributes to how Indigenous people experience their identities; the terms of political recognition affect how other groups in society react to and engage with Indigenous people. To put it another way, legal criteria for the acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples, which were originally intended only for the *assessment* of membership in Indigenous social categories, instead have fed into the active reproduction and transformation of the very social categories they profess to evaluate.

Over the decades, social determinations of identity, beyond the state's formal processes for acknowledgment, have evolved in dialog with the legally reified criteria for Indigenous recognition. And yet, the social recognition of individuals as Indigenous by members of their own communities, by other Indigenous peoples, and by non-Indigenous publics continues to resist the reductive rules that appear in laws and regulations. The result is a situation in which, today, Indigenous people live with both social and legal models of recognition. They must navigate multiple sets of criteria, both official rules and everyday, unspoken logics about their recognizability as Indigenous individuals and groups. To make matters even more complicated, even as Indigenous people contend with the social and legal determinations of Indigenous identity made by others, they also maintain distinct ways of reckoning belonging within their own Indigenous social and political formations.

In this dissertation, I center my inquiry on the relationship between these social and legal models of Indigeneity, according to which everyday and official determinations of identity are made. Although many Indigenous communities contend with both social and legal forms of recognition, the context for and content of recognition measures varies importantly across different Indigenous groups. In intentional acknowledgment of the diversity of Indigenous experiences of recognition, I bring two geographically and culturally distinct cases together, side by side in this dissertation. Through analysis of historical and ethnographic materials, I examine two distinct but simultaneous cases of Indigenous efforts to transform their peoples' circumstances through the pursuit of official recognition: the experiences of Sami people in Norway and of Nipmuc people in the northeastern United States.

Sami people are Indigenous to territories in northern Europe, today claimed by four distinct nation states: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Though they continue to face challenges—not least of all climate change—the history of Sami people in Norway from the mid-20th century to today is often characterized as a success story (Josefsen 2010, 2011; Saugestad 2012; Lien 2018). Sami people faced powerful stigmatization in Norway, from the Danish monarchy's incursions into northern reaches of the country in the late 16th century. Such dynamics continued over centuries, and into the formative centuries of Norwegian state building. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Sami people faced an official “Norwegianization” (*fornorskning*) policy endorsed by Norwegian central government authorities (Eriksen and Niemi 1980; Lien 2018, 5–6). In the second half of the 20th century, however, Sami activists and political leaders succeeded in bringing this ongoing colonial relationship into the public eye. This change

centered on a large-scale hydroelectric dam project in Norway's northernmost county of Finnmark. Many Norwegians objected to the dam on environmental grounds and protested in solidarity with the Sami people and their claim that the dam would violate their rights as Indigenous people, rights they insisted extended not only to their language and culture but to lands, waters, and traditional economic activities, including reindeer herding and fishing. By 1990, they had secured formal acknowledgment of the Norwegian state's responsibility for the continued thriving of Sami language and culture and had gained a new venue for political representation with the creation of the Sami Parliament of Norway through the Sami Act of 1987 (*Lov om Sametinget og andre samiske rettsforhold [sameloven]*). Developments have continued from there, with advances in the Sami role in land management in the county of Finnmark among other important developments.

The Nipmuc recognition history, by contrast, is not recalled as a success story, least of all by those directly involved in petitioning the US government for federal recognition (e.g., Gould 2013). Nipmuc people are the "freshwater" people of inland regions of the US northeast, today part of the US states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.¹ These "New England" states are direct successors to the English colonial project in the region that began in the 17th century. Though some Nipmuc groups are today clearly acknowledged by state authorities in Massachusetts, this reaffirmation of their status is relatively recent, dating back only to the 1970s (Dukakis 1976). At the federal level, Nipmuc people continue to lack acknowledgment in the important legal

¹ The name Nipmuc is related to the word for "freshwater" in the Algonkian languages of the region (Doughton 1997, 221, n2).

category of “federally recognized Indian tribes” despite Nipmuc leaders’ multi-generational struggle for recognition.

Beginning the early 1960s, Nipmuc leaders engaged in the national recognition movement among non-federally recognized tribes (Hauptman and Campisi 1988; Klopotek 2011). These tribes lacked the formal relationship with federal authorities that provided federally recognized tribes with protections, rights to federally provided services, and a degree of political legitimacy that many non-federally recognized tribes struggled to achieve in their own states and localities and among other tribes at the national scale. In 1978, the national recognition movement contributed to the creation of new rules by which non-federally recognized tribes could gain federal acknowledgment. Nipmuc people pursued the petitioning process, submitting themselves and their history to the criteria outlined in the federal regulation on acknowledgment. Ultimately, after decades of research, writing, and political work, their efforts were met with a “final determination” declaring them ineligible for acknowledgment under the regulation. From the time of that decision, in 2004, up through 2018, the tribe appealed the decision, ultimately without success.

On the surface, these two contexts are quite different. Sami people have lived in proximity with Scandinavians for thousands of years; for Nipmuc people, the arrival of English settlers was swift, deadly, and radically transformational for Indigenous societies within just a few generations. Sami people have won the forms of political recognition they sought; Nipmuc peoples’ results have been more mixed, with some level of state acknowledgment accompanied by the formal denial of federal status. Indeed, the two states in question here are quite different; the small, centralized, and self-consciously

homogenous national state of Norway may appear to have little in common with the United States, a large, federal, diverse “empire-state” (Jung et al. 2015, 56).

However, certain parallels between the histories of the Sami in Norway and Nipmuc people in the United States make it not only comprehensible but also fruitful to set these two stories alongside one another. Even though Norway is often understood as part of the “Old World” and the US part of the “New World,” Sami and Nipmuc people entered in colonial relations with budding states during roughly the same period, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Sami and Nipmuc people, unlike many other Indigenous peoples, never signed treaties with colonial powers. Instead, each group sought political acknowledgment much later on, during the second half of the 20th century, in a time when a wide range of political and social movements had begun to articulate their demands in a new language of “recognition.”

Given that both the Sami and Nipmuc efforts to be recognized by national governments began amidst the multicultural optimism of the 1960s–1980s, it is notable how dramatically the two cases have diverged over the decades. Nipmucs spent forty years in pursuit of federal acknowledgment, beginning long before and ending long after a new federal acknowledgment regulation was introduced in 1978. Ultimately, they were unsuccessful in gaining federal acknowledgment through the process, despite many decades of effort. In Norway, Sami engagements with the state translated into new laws, institutions, and even a constitutional amendment within a decade, but it was left up to individual Sami citizens to apply to participate in the new institutions—that is, if they could fulfill the criteria outlined in the Sami Act.

In both cases, the pursuit and conveyance or denial of forms of political recognition has formed an important terrain of experience across the generational time of the past five decades. A straightforward policy analysis of the differences between the Norwegian Sami Act and the US federal regulation—what their criteria are, how they are applied—would miss much of what is significant about these recognition histories. In both cases, the legal models were created in the context of existing social models of Indigenous difference. In their own ways, the policies in each country draw on widespread assumptions about what makes a person or group Indigenous. In other ways, however, the policies mobilized experts' competing criteria to create legal models that differed from widespread assumptions. Once introduced, the legal models—and the official recognized status they mediated—came to affect determinations of Indigenous authenticity in society at large, beyond the contexts strictly governed by legal criteria or officially recognized status.

In neither the Norwegian nor the US case has the introduction of formal rules for the recognition of groups or individuals as Indigenous resolved the problems that Indigenous people face in the national society. Whether or not a group is formally acknowledged by government authorities is only one criterion in widely circulating models of Indigeneity. These social models mobilize logics about appearance, linguistic practices, and cultural authenticity unique to each of the two societal settings that I address in this dissertation. Unlike the terms of laws and regulations, these social criteria by which people read others' identities are reproduced and transformed through their use in everyday life. Here, there is no recourse to a single authoritative standard; particular

readings of identity gain their power from the alignment of sets of signs that, when perceived together, are taken as evidence of authentic Indigeneity.

In this dissertation, I seek to examine how the models of identity according to which Sami and Nipmuc people are recognizable (or not) as Indigenous people are related to the legal standards of recognition that were established in past decades and still exist today. On a first level, I pursue such an analysis for what it can demonstrate about the position of Indigenous people within two quite different states and societies and how it might illuminate the modes of marginalization at work in a European nation-state versus in a settler colonial empire-state. On second level, I am interested in the (non)recognition of Indigenous people in social and political life for what it can illuminate about perceiving subjects' role in "reading" individuals in terms of social personae or assigning them to social categories. Such determinations often flow from ideological commitments that elevate particular signs to the status of defining criteria governing particular forms of social difference. Some such domains—for instance, language and descent—also appear as criteria in legal models of Indigeneity. However, the ways legal criteria are evaluated differ from how people apply social models of identity in everyday life. Both social and political recognition are *results* of processes of meaning-making in which a perceiving subject evaluates signs in terms of the criteria that comprise a social (and often unwritten) or legal (explicit) model of identity. I am interested in how the recognition of Indigenous peoples works as a semiotic process—that is, as a meaning-making process—and I am interested in how social and political recognition is experienced by the Indigenous people who are subject to it.

In this initial chapter, I begin with a discussion of the two key concepts that make this project thinkable: Indigeneity and recognition. Next, I turn to why and how I study Indigenous recognition across two contexts. I introduce in more detail the histories of Sami and Nipmuc people, with a focus on their experiences of social and political forms of recognition. With that context in place, I briefly introduce the research questions, theoretical foundations, and research methods that define this study before concluding the Introduction with an overview of the chapters that follow.

Key concepts: Indigeneity and recognition

Indigeneity and recognition are two concepts through which I articulate my research questions and bring together the two distinct research contexts that are the empirical heart of this dissertation. Thus, here at the outset, I seek to make explicit my understanding of these two key concepts. Indigeneity, in this dissertation, is treated as a concept that describes the relationship between settler colonial and Indigenous societies and polities. It is a political designation that is grounded in relationships to land and waters and with later-arriving populations that established modern states on Indigenous homelands. Recognition has a host of meanings that extend beyond the way I use to refer to social and legal forms of acknowledgment. Below, I outline in more detail the history of these two concepts and how they have come to have multiple meanings. I locate the primary meanings I ascribe to the two words in this dissertation among the wider field of possible meanings associated with each concept.

Indigeneity

Before the term “Indigenous people” was commonplace, the word “indigenous” was primarily used to refer to plant and animal species that originally evolved in an area or had existed there for a very long time. Two constituent elements of the concept, then, precede the application of the word “indigenous” to people: (1) a particular link to place and (2) a long time-depth for that connection. Both these meanings are linked to the later concept of “Indigenous people.” The notion of time-depth is central in the Norwegian way of saying “Indigenous people.” The Norwegian word *urfolk*, combines a first syllable, *ur-*, from the German prefix meaning “out of, original” and *folk*, meaning people. The Norwegian *urfolk* captures the sense of the word “aboriginal” in English. “Aboriginal” means the original inhabitant of a place; the word dates back to at least the mid-18th century, originating much earlier than the use of “indigenous” to refer to people. “Indigenous,” drawing on classifications of flora and fauna, has a link to time-depth but also quite directly to location. The idea of and words for such original inhabitants emerged during and as a result of European colonial expansion. They were bound up with Europeans’ ideas about naturally existing races and nationalities as these evolved over time in the context of the expansion of European empires over colonized territories.

The contemporary meaning of Indigeneity, the one with a capital “I” that I use in this dissertation, brought Sami and Nipmuc stories together in new ways in the second half of the 20th century. This notion of Indigeneity, which gained popularity in the 1970s, was a distinctly political one, concerned with the ongoing relations of colonialism in states that, more often than not, understood themselves as free, democratic, and sometimes even postcolonial. In 1974, at a meeting of Indigenous political activists in

Guyana, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) agreed on an explicit description of the people to whom the term “Indigenous people” should be applied (Crossen 2014, 93). They defined Indigenous peoples in terms of the political position they held within the modern nation states claiming sovereignty over Indigenous peoples’ traditional lands and waters:

The term “Indigenous People” refers to people living in countries which have a population composed of differing ethnic or racial groups who are descendants of the earliest populations living in the area and who do not, as a group, control the national government of the countries within which they live. (WCIP 1974) Race, ethnicity, descent, territory, and political control all feature in this definition.²

WCIP was pathbreaking in its early articulation of an explicit definition of “Indigenous people.” In embracing an explicit definition, the WCIP is also an outlier. Other international political bodies have resisted implementing definitive definitions. The United Nations, for instance, has preferred to identify individual groups based on a set of factors that combined could qualify the group in question as Indigenous.³ At the same time, the explanation of the term “indigenous people” provided by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, established in 2000, seems to refer directly to the earlier WCIP definition:⁴

[Indigenous peoples] are the descendants - according to a common definition - of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became

² As we will see later, these same factors play a role in the legal and social models of Indigeneity that operate within distinct national contexts, though each individual case weighs these factors differently.

³ According to a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Factsheet, these are: “Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; Distinct social, economic or political systems; Distinct language, culture and beliefs; From non-dominant groups of society; Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities” (United Nations, n.d.). Taken together, these criteria constitute an official model of Indigeneity, but one with only soft power, not legal weight, in the way that national legal models are actively applied through agencies of government at the national level.

⁴ The WCIP definition is also taken as critically important in historians’ scholarship on the emergence of Indigenous rights at the international scale (see Crossen 2014, 2017).

dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means. (UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, no date)

The UN Permanent Forum's early 21st century definition is both structural and relational, and more specific than the WCIP definition in terms of how exactly peoples came to be Indigenous through historical experience when marginalized "through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means." This definition emphasizes that Indigenous peoples have become Indigenous through their historical experiences. Those experiences form the foundation of a universal category and possible globe-spanning solidarities between Indigenous peoples who share certain kinds of historical experiences and, accordingly, certain contemporary conditions.

These formal, explicit definitions inform but do not always exactly match what the label "Indigenous" may mean to those who take it up in self-description and those that use it to describe others. Nonetheless, contemporary understandings of Indigenous people in the sphere of Indigenous international political engagement are in direct dialog not only with histories of colonization but with the contemporary system of nation states. Any people who already control their own country would not count—would not be recognizable—as Indigenous according to the UN criteria or the WCIP definition. It is also important to note that formal, institutional or governmental recognition is meted out at multiple scales; not all groups recognized as Indigenous by authorities in their home region or state are identified as such by the United Nations and vice versa.

Formal definitions or standards describing who is Indigenous originated in an attempt to describe common historical and contemporary experiences across cultural and geographical diversity. Today, navigating such definitions has become a part of the experience of what it means to be Indigenous. Yet, this element of Indigeneity is, at the

same time, experienced quite differently by Indigenous people with different relationships to the criterial components of such definitions and distinct experiences of how government standards have been applied to them.⁵

Recognition

The notion of Indigeneity that is central in this dissertation is in part an outcome of Indigenous people's engagement in an anticolonial intellectual tradition that outlined the possibility for solidarity among colonized peoples and focused on recognition as a political and philosophical idea (Fanon [1952] 2008). However, in many places, Indigenous people had been subject to forms of acknowledgment since long before this anticolonial framework emerged in the mid-20th century. Already, hundreds of years ago, treaties and other formal documents recorded acknowledgments of Indigenous peoples' position relative to colonial and state powers. When "recognition" is mentioned in discussions of Indigenous peoples, interlocutors may infer meanings that originate in a variety of historical periods and that range from the everyday uses of the word to its particular meanings in international law to the political and philosophical meanings the word "recognition" has accrued over the centuries. Here, I briefly review the multiple meanings of recognition in order to show how the concept has a uniquely diverse array of possible associations in Indigenous contexts. I begin with the denotations (dictionary definitions) of the word itself before moving to the uses of the term in political and philosophical discourse and in scholarly discourse within the academy.

⁵ It is also worth noting that Indigenous voices in political science point out the trouble with the lack of concrete definition, even as others may see this situation as unavoidable or disadvantageous (see Cornassel 2003).

In perhaps its most common usage, the word “recognition” can refer to how someone experiences something as familiar or comes to a realization about something that they had not understood before. This is the sense in which we can say that an individual was recognizable as Sami or as Nipmuc according to the social models of identity that a perceiving subject employs. However, the word “recognition” can also be used to include social acknowledgments of this sort of categorization, often accompanied by an acknowledgment of value (often of praise). This meaning is closely related to the meaning of recognition in international law that describes the acknowledgment of the sovereignty of one nation by another. That particular meaning has an important history in Indigenous contexts. Since the early decades of European colonization, monarchs and later states would sign treaties acknowledging indigenous inhabitants’ distinctiveness as their own peoples, or even nations, and negotiate the relationship between colonial authorities linked to European monarchies and indigenous leaders and their polities.

In addition to these simple meanings that one can find in a dictionary, however, “recognition” has a long history as a political and philosophical concept. Philosophical discourse on recognition began with Hegel’s dialectic on the Master and the Slave, written in the early 19th century (Hegel [1807] 1977). Recognition emerges a theme in Hegel in the context of his attention to the conditions required for the realization of human freedom. For Hegel, an individual’s freedom and self-determination are real—more real, even, than material reality—and have important implications for the soul, the mind, the self. In Hegel’s philosophy, finite and the infinite aspects of the world are a progressively developing, self-perfecting whole, and the attainment of true human freedom or agency through the navigation of such dialectics is one of his central

concerns. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Hegel believed that the individual human self could only develop and progress through its interactions with others. Today this may seem like an obvious statement; it is solidly the predominant consensus within the social sciences today that what we might call the self develops intersubjectively, through socialization and experience, the key idea in his dialectic of the Master and the Slave, where the impossibility of true, liberating recognition of the other across the divide of hierarchy presents a limitation for the attainment of agency by a subject occupying either position.

Hegel's work, however, was only the beginning of a long history of circulation and transformation of the concept. Critical to these transformations was Frantz Fanon's mid-20th century book, *Black Skins, White Masks*, which established a direct connection between recognition and identity. Fanon ([1952] 2008) argued that true recognition, in Hegel's sense, is not possible under conditions of coloniality. In the course of this argument and drawing on his own lived experience, Fanon pointed out that certain embodied characteristics and linguistic practices were interpreted as ironclad signs not just of identity—in his core example, Blackness—but also of inferiority. Fanon described the overdetermining influence of standards of value rooted in white colonial society and how colonial subjects were recruited to identify with these standards through the very dynamics of recognition (in the sense of acknowledgment) that Hegel had thought emancipatory.

During the 1960s and 1970s, social movements across the globe took up this anticolonial discourse on recognition. Various groups championed pride in their stigmatized identities and demanded others acknowledge their distinctiveness and its

positive value. When Indigenous peoples took up politics of recognition during this period, any discussion of “recognition” was already weighted with the longstanding political meaning of recognition in Indigenous contexts, where recognition had meant acknowledgment of political authority and rights to self-determination (as in treaties). During the 1960s and 1970s Indigenous peoples did build their political demands in synergy with new activist frameworks that focused on recognition, but they also continued to center the idea of acknowledgment of rights to sovereignty or self-determination as Indigenous nations as an integral element of the concept of recognition that they mobilized in their politics.

In the 1970s and 1980s, state actors began to respond to activist demands for recognition by developing concrete policies that purported to offer recognition to Indigenous peoples and to some other minoritized groups. However, these state solutions did not embrace the transformative visions of Indigenous leaders who stated that “Real recognition of our presence and humanity would require a genuine reconsideration of so many people’s role in North American society that it would amount to a genuine leap of imagination” (Manuel et al. 1974, 224). Instead, state forms of recognition encompassed executive orders, laws, and regulations that enabled states to administer specific Indigenous rights to particular Indigenous groups. These measures outlined who exactly—in terms of groups or sometimes in terms of the individuals within them—would count as Indigenous for the purposes of the state. With these measures, state actors acknowledged the moral authority of Indigenous demands; however, at the same time, in some cases, the introduction of recognition measures also constituted efforts to contain Indigenous dissent (Day 2001; Day and Sadik 2002; Coulthard 2007, 2014).

For much of the 20th century, influential political and philosophical discourse on recognition was rooted in intellectual and activist circles and in policymakers' networks, but not in the university-based academia. Only later, in the early 1990s, did academics begin to weigh in on recognition as a political and philosophical idea. Most notable among the early contributions on this theme is an essay by Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor (1992) titled "The Politics of Recognition." In this widely read essay, Taylor characterized a wave of political movements among "minorities" and "separatist groups" as "politics of recognition" (Taylor 1992, 25). Despite their differences, Taylor saw them as belonging to a single overarching category because recognition was one of their central demands. Though Taylor coined the term "politics of recognition" to describe this activist framework, he also substantively transformed the meaning of recognition by linking the term "politics of recognition" to institutional measures designed and deployed by states. Taylor accorded the state the power to bestow meaningful recognition, in Hegel's sense, on a variety of identity groups suffering from stigmatization in society at large, including Indigenous peoples. Though policymakers had already been claiming that the measures they created were forms of recognition, Taylor's contribution helped to solidify a shift away from a transformative, activist notion of recognition to more constrained vision of recognition as something to be conferred by the state.

During the course of the 1990s, scholars across fields—a range of academics who wrote on the political and societal challenges of the time—entered into scholarly debates on recognition. Recognition, with its new political and philosophical connotations, became the subject of research and theoretical writing in a way it had not been before.

Political theorists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others wrote on the importance of these changes in the predominant “grammar” of political claims-making (Fraser 2001a).

Some anthropologists had noted the rise of activism around the recognition of identity in their field sites even before Taylor (1992) coined a term for it (e.g., Handler 1988), and others pointed to the importance of this activism for anthropology as early as the early 1990s (Turner 1993). But the great majority of anthropological engagement with recognition succeeded Taylor’s contributions. From the mid-1990s onward, anthropologists utilized ethnographic fieldwork to analyze the impasses Indigenous and minoritized groups faced both in terms of legal or institutional forms of recognition and in terms of the societal logics about difference, acknowledgment, and value that accompanied them (Alghasi et al. 2009; Asch 1999; Biolsi 2001, 2005; Blackburn 2005, 2007, 2009; Buur 2001; Campisi and Starna 1999, 2004; Cattelino 2008, 2010, 2011; Eisenlohr 2006; Gibney and Roxstrom 2001; Gooder and Jacobs 2000; Grabowski 1995; Graham 2002, 2005; Greenbaum 1991; Greene 1993, 2004; Jackson and Warren 2005; Lea 2012; Limerick 2018; Miller 2003; Muehlmann 2008; Peña 2005; Ong et al. 1996; Shah 2007; Urla 2012). Following on the pattern established by Fanon ([1952] 2008) and drawing on developments in anthropological theory from the final decades of the 20th century, anthropologists specified how power relations took shape in the very processes of perception and construal that make recognition, in the social sense, possible (Hankins 2014; Middleton 2015; Simpson 2014; Limerick 2018; Sturm 2019). Like Fanon ([1952] 2008) had done decades earlier, anthropological contributions highlighted the importance of experience in constituting not just individual subjectivities but also the very social

categories that individuals draw on in constructing their sense of self and their place in the world.

While political philosophers, anthropologists, and other academics took up recognition as a subject of research and theory, many Indigenous peoples and other minoritized groups continued to engage with official recognition policies in efforts to better their ability to control their own futures. In the context of Indigenous peoples, where concrete recognition measure often involved categorical definitions of Indigenous subjectivity or group legitimacy, it quickly became apparent that policies were not operating producing the outcomes Taylor or other liberal proponents had r them. Within a few decades of the origins of new recognition measures, it was beginning to become clear to experts (Campisi and Starna 1999) and to Indigenous peoples themselves (Boelscher-Ignace and Ignace 1998; Alfred and Bruchac 1999) that this new politics of recognition was not working as advertised. Indigenous critics pointed out that the new recognition paradigm was drawing them further into colonial power relations rather than alleviating them of colonial oppression (Day and Sadik 2002; Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson 2014).

Scholars in Indigenous Studies and in anthropology addressed both official rules of recognition and the dynamics of social recognizability that made official criteria logical within particular societal contexts.⁶ Such studies of recognition draw on both basic definitions of the word recognition—the way recognition is an outcome of a movement from perception to construal, an acknowledgment of familiarity or a realization—and on international law and political/philosophical meanings of the term.

⁶ See Hankins (2014) for an excellent example in anthropology. His description of the use of “definitional criteria” to detect Buraku individuals in Japan brings together official elements (genealogical records) and embodied modes of detection (like sense of smell). For an example in Native and Indigenous Studies, see Barker (2011), *Native Acts*.

However, often they do not distinguish clearly between these different meanings of recognition, nor do they take up the relationship of social and legal recognition as the central object of study. In this dissertation, I build on the existing scholarship on recognition in anthropology, building my questions from a theoretical frame shared by authors like Povinelli (2002), Hankins (2014), and Simpson (2014). And yet, because of the unique history of Indigenous peoples with the concept of recognition, one related to their acknowledgment by colonial states long before multiculturalism, I focus explicitly on Indigenous cases, whereas much of the anthropological literature has focused on other minoritized groups. Having established above the variety of meanings of Indigeneity and recognition, I move now to detailing my own positioning of Indigenous experiences of recognition as my object of study in this dissertation.

Indigenous Experiences of Recognition as an Object of Study

Existing anthropological contributions to the study of recognition and the production of social difference seek to illuminate something new about how recognition works as a form of social and power relations by bringing specific contexts into dialog with overarching ideas, among them the concept of recognition. In many ways, this dissertation builds on this existing work, particularly where these authors deploy the tools of semiotic anthropology to illuminate the workings of recognition (e.g., Povinelli 2002, 2011; Hankins 2014; Simpson 2014). However, my approach is different from the existing work in two major ways. First, I focus specifically on Indigenous experiences of recognition, which involve older political concepts of recognition rather than just the

multicultural concept of politics of recognition. Because the object of study in my work is Indigenous experiences of recognition, I do not focus on only a single empirical context.

In this dissertation, my research centers on Indigenous people's experiences of recognition, in both its social and political forms. Recognition, as an outcome of acts of perception and construal, is a basic element of human life without which social life as we know it would not be possible. However, though dynamics of social recognition and recognizability involve and affect us all, during the past several decades Indigenous people have had to contend with legal and political forms of recognition that few groups experience. Unlike in processes of social recognition, these legal determinations are made according to explicit criteria that govern who is recognized as Indigenous for the purposes of the state.

Though many groups engage in politics of recognition, few are subject to these explicit legal models of identity in the way Indigenous people in many places are.⁷ This unique situation makes Indigenous experiences of recognition a compelling object of anthropological study, with the potential to reveal the workings of power through both legal and societal criteria for recognizability.⁸ Modes and norms of perception, as reinforced through metasemiotic discourse and histories of socialization, are critical here. The way people move from perception to construal when reading others' identities is informed both by explicit, expert norms of evaluation of legal criteria and by deeply rooted ideologies of social difference, including perceptions/beliefs about the nature of

⁷ Other anthropology on the production of difference in liberal multicultural societies includes work on language-related minorities which may (Heller 2011; Heller et al. 2016) or may not (Rosa 2020) be the subject of explicit legislation.

⁸ Many scholars from different disciplines and theoretical orientations have written on how "the conduct of conduct" extends beyond state actors alone to involve the society (Coombe 2000; Rose and Miller 1992).

Indigenous difference in particular. Social difference is not only managed but actively produced in particular ways through attempts to manage it (Heller 2011; Heller et al. 2016) and in defiance of such attempts (Rosa 2019). And yet, at the same time, the conventions that shape what becomes a meaningful site of ideological work often go beyond the active intentionality of any one actor (Gal and Irvine 2019, 167–172).

Even as Indigenous recognition makes a compelling object of research on conceptual grounds, the ways these forms of recognition work and how they are experienced by those who encounter them can only be studied through engagement with real empirical contexts for research. Each specific context is connected to some of the same global circuits in social and political thought, as well as to historical legacies of colonization, and yet there is a world of complexity in the specifics of the forms of recognition that have been demanded and implemented within any one context. These complexities are rooted in the specificity of the particular contexts in which Indigenous recognition becomes thinkable and actionable. In the face of such diversity, presenting an analysis of a single case of Indigenous recognition, alone, can implicitly give the impression that all cases resemble that one. Indeed, much of the abstract discourse about recognition in international discussion of recognition of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous rights gives precisely this impression, as does some of the scholarship that seeks to build a theory of recognition as a form of colonial power from engagements with a single national context.⁹

⁹ See Merry (2006) on why United Nations discourse on international rights tends toward consensus building that obscures differences among groups and contexts through abstract language. Coulthard's (2007, 2014) work is an example of scholarship that builds a vision of recognition as a form of oppression from a single case, in this case, the Canadian context. I do not mention this as a critique of the work, which follows most anthropological work on recognition in its single-sitedness, but rather to point out how I see my work as complementary to it. At least one ethnography of multicultural recognition (Hankins [2014])

In a departure from much of the existing scholarly literature on recognition, in this dissertation I examine the experiences of recognition of two different groups of Indigenous peoples and present these two cases alongside one another within the same analytical framework. As much as these cases cannot stand in for the wide diversity of Indigenous experience, they can begin to reveal the differences in the forms and terms of recognition across contexts, distinctions that are less readily visible when only one case forms the basis for theses about the nature of recognition. Constraints of time, space, and access precluded me from including more than two distinct research contexts in this dissertation, but I hope even these two, when presented together, will provide a clearer picture of the range and variability of Indigenous experiences of recognition than either could do alone.

Two Contexts for Studying Indigenous Experiences of Recognition

The two cases I bring together here, the stories of Sami people in Norway and of Nipmuc people in the northeastern United States, are connected by ideas that circulate at the global scale, chief among them Indigeneity and recognition, but they are not historically connected in most other respects. I do not know of any instance of personal or direct political solidarity connections between Nipmuc people and Sami people. Each group has grappled with the particular opportunities for seeking recognition that two very different states and societies presented them. Both groups, however, did engage with global discourse on recognition as a way to challenge the stigmatization of their identities and simultaneously pursue political rights as Indigenous people. These efforts among

does engage with this problem of commensurability by working across more than one group, but this work deals with labor-related minorities, not Indigenous peoples.

Sami and Nipmuc people span roughly the same period, from the 1960s to the present. And yet, the precise nature of their efforts toward recognition and the way they were received by state actors and national publics are notably different, highlighting the variability of Indigenous experiences of social and political recognition. Below, I provide a brief outline of Sami and Nipmuc histories, highlighting the establishment of legal criteria for the acknowledgment of Indigenous people in the 1970s and 1980s and how these are related to social models of Indigeneity in each of the two contexts.

The Sami Situation in Norway

Sami people in Norway today live all over the country but are particularly numerous in the northern counties and in the country's capital and largest city, Oslo. Sami people from particular regions share histories, cultural and subsistence traditions, and language within and to a lesser degree across particular groups.¹⁰ Despite regional differences, Sami people have long articulated their identities—and their political aspirations—in terms of pan-Sami nationalism, uniting Sami people across geographic areas and across the state borders that today run through Sami homelands (Lien 2018; Zachariassen 2012). Language, traditional crafts (*duodji*, North Sami), and traditional economic activities (most famously reindeer herding but also fishing and other activities), and a close relationship to nature are important to both Sami understandings of their

¹⁰ Take language as a key example: Lule Sami, South Sami, and North Sami languages predominate in Norway, among eight total Sami languages spoken across Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. While the roots of the many Sami languages are similar, they are not mutually intelligible. There are a number of different languages and dialects across Sápmi. The three most commonly used in Norway are South Sami, Lule Sami, and North Sami, all of which have written languages (Duolljá and Gaski 2021).

existence as an ethnic group and Indigenous people and to outsiders' understandings of Sami distinctiveness (Kemi Gjerpe 2013; Eidheim 1989).

Within Norway, these cultural idioms also serve as signs of Sami-ness to the wider public, as they do for some international audiences as well. Despite the well-known Sami history with race biology (Kjellman 2013; Ericsson 2021), today Sami individuals are not necessarily immediately recognizable as Sami based on phenotypic traits alone (Dankertsen 2019, 126–130; Valkonen 2014, 216–217).¹¹ Instead, in reading ethnic identity in embodied encounters, perceiving subjects rely on signs like forms of dress (Sami motifs or references in clothing, jewelry, or accessories), on linguistic signs (both the use of Sami languages and dialects or accents in spoken Norwegian associated with particular Sami areas), and on associations with certain activities or contexts (particular places, activities like reindeer herding, Sami politics or art, etc.).¹² Signs of this sort are taken in combination with other elements of appearance, conduct, and association to make always-provisional initial determinations of identity.

Sami presence is openly notable in many northern communities today and is evident in regional and national media. Norwegian Sami leaders have a role in Indigenous activism and organizing at the global scale, as they have since the 1970s, often appearing in distinctively Sami dress at international meetings on Indigenous rights or climate and appearing in regional, national, and international press coverage (e.g., Beeler 2015; Egell-Johnsen 2015; Pulk 2015; Svala 2015). Though substantive

¹¹ Norwegian Sami sociologist Dankertsen (2019, 130–131) also comments on how uncomfortable this topic is among her colleagues in Nordic academia, which perhaps accounts for the limited scholarly literature on the subject of Sami identities and racial formation in the Nordic countries.

¹² See, for example, the comments of Aile Javo about trying to be visible as a Sami person at the COP21 climate negotiations in Paris in 2015 (in Beeler 2015): "...the Sami people, we have light hair, blue eyes, some of us, it's not very easy to see that we are indigenous if we are not wearing our traditional dress."

knowledge of Sami culture and history is lacking among much of the national public (and certainly also internationally), efforts are ongoing to include Sami content in public school curricula; many of these efforts are led and studied by Sami people themselves (Kemi Gjerpe 2017, 2018; Olsen 2021). Many Norwegians are at least notionally familiar with the ongoing presence of Sami people in Norway, even though this knowledge is often limited in depth and can rely on stereotypic understandings of Sami people as northern, rural, reindeer herders, an image that applies to relatively few Sami people today.¹³

Norse and Sami people coexisted, at times side-by-side, for thousands of years, conscious of differences between their two groups in terms of language and modes of subsistence (Kortekangas 2021, 6). Only later did the relationship between Scandinavians and Sami people begin to resemble the rise of one group to dominance over the other as described in the UN Permanent Forum definition of Indigenous people. This transition took place during the long union between the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway, which lasted from the close of the 14th century through 1814. In the late 16th century, when Danish authorities (in one instance, the King himself) travelled to the far north, their expectations about the people they would encounter drew on earlier European travelers' accounts of the far north. To Europeans, the far north was a wild land, linked to Satan, and inhabited by "finns" (*finner*, from the old Norse *finnr*, to find or to forage), non-Christian people who were thought to possess mysterious spiritual powers (Hagen 2013; Kortekangas 2021, 6). Early centuries of the Danish union involved the expansion of Scandinavian settlement and resource extraction in Sami areas, especially around the turn

¹³ For a quantitative account of the contemporary situation of Sami people in Norway see K. Johansen (2018) *Sami Statistics Speak: Numbers and Commentary*.

of the 17th century. This expansion was accompanied by state sanctioned oppression of Sami people, including the persecution of those who continued to practice Sami spirituality and the disruption of Sami economic activities (Hagen 2013; Lægland 2021).

However, when Sami people today write and talk about the history of their oppression as Indigenous people, they often refer to the events of more recent centuries. In the wake of the Napoleonic war, Denmark, which had been on the losing side of the conflict, was compelled to transfer Norway into a union with Sweden. Attempts by Norwegian elites to make a bid for independence at this juncture were unsuccessful, but in the union with Sweden, Norway gained substantial power of home government including the ability to elect representatives to Parliament (*Stortinget*) as outlined in the 1814 constitution (*Grunnloven*) (Sejersted 2021). During the Swedish union, Norwegian elites continued to aspire to independence. They embraced national romanticism in arts and culture and even as an element of policy, considering language and culture to be essential signs of national belonging and national loyalty (Haverkamp 2019).

During this period, the state enacted policies that discriminated against “Sami-speaking Norwegians” (*samisk-talende nordmenn*) (Stordahl 1997; Minde 2005). Nationalist sentiments questioned the loyalty of citizens who spoke Finno-Ugric languages rather than Scandinavian ones, especially when neighboring Finland became a part of Russia (Eriksen and Niemi 1981). By this time, Sami-occupied lands in the northern part of Norway were considered to be owned by the crown, though they could be deeded to individuals who were farming or making use of them. As a part of the Norwegianization policy, ownership of lands in the country of Finnmark was restricted to those with Scandinavian names. At the core of the Norwegianization policy lay

straightforward attempts to assimilate Sami people to Norwegian society especially by inducing them to speak the Norwegian language.¹⁴ Sami children attended publicly run boarding schools where they were not allowed to speak their own languages, even outside of hours of instruction (Minde 2005; Kortekangas 2021). During this same period, long-held stigma against Sami people received an infusion of legitimacy through the rise of scientific racism in the Nordic context as elsewhere (Stordahl 1997, 140; Kjellman 2013; Ericsson 2021).

By the second half of the 19th century, Sami practices like reindeer herding, living in different kinds of dwellings from their Norwegian neighbors, dressing differently, or eating different foods, were stigmatized. Though some Sami leaders advocated openly for the protection of Sami ways of life, many Sami people themselves came to understand Sami language and culture as signs of backwardness and aspired to Norwegian identities for themselves or for their children. This resulted in substantial shifts toward Norwegian language, dress, and other norms in many Sami communities, though many communities retained the use of Sami language outside of settings where Norwegians were present or maintained other cultural beliefs and practices (Eidheim 1989; Thuen 2002). Nonetheless, the early 20th century saw the beginnings of Pan-Sami organizing, across nation-state borders (Berg 1995; Lien 2018; Zachariassen 2012), in part as a direct response to the elaboration of Norwegian nationalism during the early decades of Norwegian national independence (Lien 2018). This trend subsided in the 1920s even before World War II

¹⁴ Norwegian languages, in the sense of a formal standard language, were invented in Norway during the 19th century as a part of national romanticism and elites' aspirations toward a sovereign Norway. One variety, *bokmål*, was created from the language spoken by elite in Oslo, while the other derived even more explicitly from Herderian logics about rural authenticity. *Nynorsk* was created by a school teacher who travelled remote rural Western Norway to try to discover the most authentically Norwegian version of the language and create a standard language from a mixture of those regional linguistic practices.

further interrupted the trajectory of this organizing and the normality of everyday life in Scandinavia, especially in Norway, which was occupied by Germany from 1940 through 1944.¹⁵

In the second half of the 20th century, after the war, Sami people in Norway began projects of cultural resurgence, undertaken in the face of ongoing assimilationist attitudes and stigma (Aarseth 2006; Bjørklund 2000a, 2000b; Eidheim 1989, 1995). In the postwar era, Sami communities publicly debated whether modernization and integration into the Norwegian national society should mean leaving Sami identities behind (Bjørklund 2011; Eidheim 1989). During this period, advocates for the protection of Sami language and culture began to articulate their arguments through reference to international notions of minority rights as they arose in Europe in the wake of World War II. From the 1950s onward, arguments for an end to the official policy of Norwegianization and support for Sami language and culture in schools and in the public realm referred to the international concept of minority rights (Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet 1959; Bjørklund 2011). Moving forward, international engagement would become important to the Sami cause, as Sami activists and organizers adopted the emerging label of “Indigenous people” to describe their position within contemporary national states and their need for rights and protections (Dunfield 1995; Minde 1995).

Those involved in the Sami movement of the mid-20th century sought to defend Sami rights, like the state-recognized right for certain Sami families to herd reindeer or rights to use Sami language in public settings. In addition to continuing earlier struggles

¹⁵ Upon their retreat from the Norwegian north in 1944, the German army burned nearly all built structures and many residents, including Sami people, had to hide in the mountains or be evacuated to the south (Thorsnæs and Askheim 2021).

over Sami language and culture in schools, the Sami made demands for control of academic knowledge produced about them (Anderson 1983, 51; Stordahl 2015), rights to have their culture and history protected and preserved (S. Fjellheim 1991), and influence over decision making regarding land and waters in Sami homelands (e.g., Allard and Skogvang 2015; Beach et al. 1992; Bull 2001, 2010; Ravna 2006, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017). They also reclaimed practices that had been lost, like distinctive forms of Sami dress and, in some communities, Sami language. In the 1960s and into the 1970s, a youth-led cultural revitalization and artistic movement recovered and reinvented many of the cultural idioms that had been less visible in prior decades as earlier generations downplayed their Sami identities to avoid stigmatization (Eidheim 1989).

Just as this momentum was picking up by the beginning of the 1970s, communities in Norway's north confronted state plans to build a largescale hydroelectric dam along the Alta River in Finnmark, Norway's northernmost county and home to several Sami majority areas. Along with other environmental impacts, the dam, as planned, would have flooded a Sami village and inundated a reindeer calving area (Paine 1982). Sami activists joined with Norwegian environmentalists to challenge the dam, engaging in demonstrations and civil disobedience that attracted national attention (Paine 1982; Lawrence 2001; Berg-Nordlie 2018). In the end, the dam project, slightly altered, went forward. Nonetheless, the controversy around the dam brought the Samis' Indigenous rights to land and water into public discourse at the national level in a way that could not easily be dismissed (Anderson and Midttun 1985; Hjorthol 2006).

Many of the forms of recognition the state has since granted to Norwegian Sami people have their roots in the aftermath of the Alta Dam controversy. While the protests

were still underway, the Norwegian government founded a public committee to investigate the situation of Sami rights to land and water and to generate recommendations on what should be done about the situation (NOU 1984:18; Semb 2015b). Among the suggestions the initial committee generated through their work during 1981–1984 were measures that recognized the Sami as a distinct population (*egen folkegruppe*) with collective rights. The first Sami rights committee recommended the addition of a “Sami paragraph” (Grunnloven § 108, often called *sameparagrafen*, though this is not an official name) to the Norwegian constitution and the creation of a Sami Parliament of Norway to serve as a voice for Sami people’s political will in the interest of self-determination (Skogvang 2021a, 2021b).¹⁶ This first committee also suggested that further Sami rights committees continue to examine the issue.¹⁷ The Norwegian authorities followed the recommendations of the first Sami Rights Committee, leading to a series of measures throughout the second part of the 1980s recognizing Sami rights in new ways. The Sami Act passed in *Stortinget* (the Norwegian Parliament) in 1987, the constitutional amendment was in place by 1988, and in 1989 the Sami Act came into effect, creating the Sami Parliament (Semb 2015a; Skogvang 2021b).

Norway indirectly created formal measures defining who counts as a Sami citizen of Norway through the creation of voter registration rules for the Sami Parliament as detailed in the Sami Act of 1987.¹⁸ These rules for enrollment to vote in Sami Parliament

¹⁶ At this point, a Sami Parliament had existed in Finland for more than a decade; the Sami Parliament of Sweden was created after the Norwegian one, in the 1990s (Josefsen 2015).

¹⁷ In the 1990s and 2000s, second and third committees generated further proposals, such as the return of land in northern Norway from central state control to local control, with a clear role for Sami people in decision making (Bull and Skogvang 2016; Josefsen 2007, 2008; Josefsen et al. 2016b).

¹⁸ This was, in part, a response to the prohibition of the creation of ethnic registers in Norway, a legacy of the country’s experience of Nazi occupation during WWII (Thon 2019). Though sometimes referred to as a Sami census (*samemantall*) the lists created through the Sami Act are voter registration lists, not a

election amount, therefore, to the only existing legal model of Sami-ness in Norway. The criteria originally enshrined in the legislation specify that:

- All persons who make a declaration to the effect that they consider themselves to be Sami, and who either:
- a. have Sami as their domestic language [*hjemmespråk*], or
 - b. have or have had a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent with Sami as his or her domestic language, or
 - c. are the child of a person who is or has been registered in the Sami electoral register may demand to be included in a separate register of Sami electors in their municipality of residence.¹⁹ (Sami Act § 2-6, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2007)

These criteria were a subject of consensus among members of the Sami Rights Committee, even when the idea of a Sami Parliament was not (NOU 1984:18).²⁰ The lack of controversy around the content of the criteria themselves reflects the way they draw on commonsense understandings of ethnic identity both among many Sami people and among many Norwegians. In other words, the legal model draws substantively on widespread social models in centering language and descent. The provision for enrollment of descendants of registered voters does introduce generational political involvement as a criterion, as, at least in theory, descendants of enrolled voters could participate even without having a Sami language as a home language.²¹ The Sami Act's

comprehensive list of all Sami people in Norway, hence the ongoing difficulty of determining the number of Sami people who really live in Norway.

¹⁹ Since the original Sami Act, there have been several slight changes to the criteria initiated by the Norwegian Sami Parliament, but they have been minor, changing the number of generations specified in (b). Scholars have written prodigiously on the history of the institution and its affect in Norwegian Sami society (Broderstad 1995a, 1995b; Sirkka 2017; Falch et al. 2016; Falch and Selle 2019; Josefsen 2014; Josefsen et al. 2015, 2016a; Josefsen and Skogerbø 2013; Kuokannen 2011). Here I have included the text of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development's (2007) English translation with the addition, parenthetically, of what I consider a term in the Norwegian language original (*Lov om Sametinget og andre samiske rettsforhold [sameloven]* 2021).

²⁰ In addition to consulting the report itself, I also accessed the archives of individuals on the Committee who have since passed away, which are archived at the Sami Archives in Kautokeino, Norway, and I interviewed the Secretary and Chairman of the first Sami Rights Committee in Oslo in 2018..

²¹ See Valkonen (2014) on the importance of descent as a criterion of Sami identity according to current Sami conceptions of Sami identity (Sami ontologies in the sense I use that term in this dissertation).

criteria are applied to individuals, each of whom must decide if they wish to enroll and fill out a form administered by the Sami Parliament, not unlike other voter registration processes.

The Sami Parliament has been an active element of Sami political life for a generation and provides a venue for showing some of the diversity within Norway's Sami community.²² The number of people enrolled has grown steadily over time (Berg-Nordlie 2020); however, today young people are less likely to participate in the institution. Popular media, including public broadcasting content, has featured debates about the relevance of the institution for Sami young people (NRK TV 2021) and even about the legitimacy of the enrollment criteria (Norvang-Herstrøm 2018). This kind of public discourse reveals that as much as the Sami Act criteria reflect widespread social models of Indigeneity, these models are not universal. For some, descent, language, and political participation are not acceptable defining criteria for who can call themselves Sami.

The Nipmuc Situation in New England, in the United States

Despite ongoing challenges for Sami people in Norway, when set alongside the history of Nipmuc people's quest for federal recognition in the United States, there is much about the Sami story that reads as a success, at least in terms of the implementation of measures that acknowledge Sami people as Indigenous people with distinct Indigenous rights. Nipmuc people are the "freshwater people" of the inland woodland region spanning the US states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut (Doughton 1997, 222, n. 2). Although the state government in Massachusetts acknowledges them

²² Some representatives in the Parliament have even gotten elected on a platform opposing the existence of such a body (Thrane 2021)

(Dukakis 1976), at the federal level, the United States government does not recognize Nipmuc people as they do over 500 other distinct tribal nations are today (Bureau of Indian Affairs 2019).

Nipmuc people who continue to live in their homelands today must contend with stereotypical imagery of “Indians”—as school mascots, especially, but also in commercial imagery—and are often perceived by others to be too white, too Black, or too mixed to be authentically Indigenous according to perceiving subjects’ models of Indigeneity.²³ Nipmuc people share the reality of fraught social recognizability with other New England Native people and with a range of Indigenous groups in the US East.²⁴ However, unlike some of these other groups, Nipmucs have difficulty being perceived as authentically Indigenous because of widespread racial ontologies reinforced by their ongoing lack of federally recognized status, a designation that many other tribes have gained since the 1980s.²⁵

As sociologists of race have recently noted, the US is a racial state, in which membership in racial categories structures access to power, privilege, and resources (Jung et al. 2011). Jung et al. (2015, 56) have called the country an “empire-state” because of the way differential power and position, explicitly founded on racial categories, has

²³ Many authors have written on the mascot phenomenon, which is widespread in the United States (e.g. Black 2002; Billings and Black 2018; Bruyneel 2016; Davis 2002; Davis-Delano et al 2020). McMullen (2002) writes on the ways Native people in New England navigate racial categories of the dominant society from her ethnographic fieldwork in the region in the 1990s. McMullen (1994, 1996a, 1996b), Doughton (1997), and Mandell (2008) have all written on the history of these dilemmas in the 19th and 20th centuries.

²⁴ See, for instance, scholarship on the Lumbee tribe (Blu 1980; Lowery 2010, 2013), for clear examples in the East but outside New England.

²⁵ For example, see earlier work (Clifford 1988; Campisi 1991) on the difficulties encountered by Mashpee Wampanoags regarding their social recognizability by the broader society in Massachusetts. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has since gained federal acknowledgment. Other examples include the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe in Connecticut and Shinnecock Indian Nation on Long Island in New York. Though these groups’ members continue to grapple with social recognizability, their social recognizability is now conditioned by the legitimizing effect of federally recognized status.

structured the operation of the state and the society in the United States from the time of its founding to today. The recognition of “Indian tribes” is a unique element of this overall picture. As Wolfe (2006) has noted, the very conceptualization of racial categories in the United States is founded on a logic of elimination of the Native. It is relatively well known that the “one-drop” logic that governs who is included in a Black racial category is a legacy of slavery. During slavery, the inclusion of the maximum number of individuals in this category made more people open to exploitation of land. In a similar, if opposite, way, the demand that authentic “Indians” be “pure-blood” opened more land to exploitation by non-Natives and limited the responsibility of governments and elites to provide recompense to Indigenous people who had been dispossessed in the founding of the nation state.

The way in which Nipmuc people encounter problems of social recognizability derive from these dynamics. While some are considered too white to be Native, others are considered too Black to be anything but black, problems that exist in the present and in historical records dating back centuries. Beyond being placed by others into racial categories other than “Indian,” Nipmucs and other Native people in New England confront widespread, and long-held, assumptions that Indigenous people belong to the past and not the present (O’Brien 2010). As Gould (2013, 228) has aptly described the situation:

Perhaps the most important issue regarding misconceptions about Indians in New England—one directly connected to the issue of authenticity so interwoven with [federal] recognition—focuses on what makes Indians so different when “they” live in raised ranch houses and send their children to public schools like their neighbors.

While these issues affect tribes across the region, the fact that Nipmuc people are not federally recognized serves to redouble, their experience of non-recognition.

In part, Nipmucs' lack of federally recognized status traces back to initial English colonization efforts in North America. Nipmuc homelands are located in a region of the country often called "New England" (a moniker that refers to the states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont). In this dissertation, I take up this place name not only because it provides a convenient regional label when so many Nipmuc cultural and political engagements play out at the regional scale but also because the legacy of English colonization still shapes life in the region today. Indeed, it is in part because their lands were subject to rampant English encroachment so early on, even within the first half of the 17th century, that Nipmuc people were not acknowledged by the federal government much earlier in their history.

In 1620, English colonists arrived at Patuxet, in what is today the US state of Massachusetts. By that time, other Europeans had long visited the shores of northeastern North America for fishing, trading with indigenous people, exploring the coast, and even, at times, abducting indigenous people into slavery (Newell 2015). These earlier arrivals brought with them European diseases that spread to indigenous populations who lacked understanding of how such communicable diseases spread and who had no inborn immunity to them. A particularly devastating epidemic directly preceded the arrival of English settlers in 1620. Though it is not known exactly what disease ravaged the region, historians estimate that 90% of the population died from the contagion during the period 1616–1619 (Bragdon 2001, 42), an unimaginable calamity.

Indigenous forms of political organization in this region emphasized the autonomy of individuals and families as well as relations of tribute with those occupying hereditary leadership positions within particular territories (O'Brien 2003; Brooks 2018). The Plymouth colonists negotiated an alliance with Massasoit, leader of the Pokanoket people of that area. This brokered peace lasted for fifty years, even though English expansion and aggression in the region raised doubts almost immediately about the wisdom of such agreements almost immediately.²⁶ During the first fifty years of English and indigenous co-presence in the region, some indigenous groups aligned themselves with the English, agreeing to take up the Christian religion and elements of English social and political order in exchange for English protection of indigenous lives and lands (O'Brien 2003).

Missionary organizations in England provided financial support for the establishment of "Praying Towns" where "praying Indians" would be induced to take up not only Christianity but English gender norms and lifestyles (O'Brien 2003; Rubin 2013; Herbster 2020). Nipmuc people were among those who joined the Praying Towns, which at their high point numbered fourteen communities across what is today Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut. While the Praying Towns emphasized fixity, attempting to induce residents to reside in a single town, they were never closed communities. Native social space spread across the landscape at a scale much more expansive than any single village. Those who joined the Praying Towns continued in relation to those who eschewed English influence in the 17th century (O'Brien 2003; Brooks 2018).

²⁶ See Brooks (2018, 190) on Narragansett sagamore Miantonomo's speech on resisting English invasion in 1624 and literature on the massacre of Pequots at Mystic in 1636 and its fallout, after Pequot combatants in the conflict with the English were sent into servitude in New English homes, to England, to Providence Island, and possibly to Bermuda (Carocci 2009; Ficke 2000).

English settlers brought with them strict racial ontologies that placed “Indians” in a specific position in the social order. While English missionaries did try to convert “Indians” to Christianity, they did not try to integrate them with English people, preferring the model of separate “Indian” towns. Even as the English encountered distinct indigenous groups, who were represented by different leaders and held longstanding alliances and enmities with neighboring groups, on a certain level they regarded all “Indians” as single group on the basis of racial ontologies they had brought with them from Europe. This view of the world through a lens of white supremacist racial hierarchy arrived in the New World with English settlers in the 17th century and was not initially ascribed to by indigenous people (Newell 2003, 2015; O’Brien 2003, 27; Brooks 2018, 174).

Within just a generation, English settlement in the region expanded in a way that indigenous people likely could not have anticipated, with tens of thousands of Englishmen arriving within the first decades after 1620 while indigenous populations continued to decline due to disease, displacement, and conflict (O’Brien 2003). The swiftness of the arrival and rise to power of the English colonists is one difference between the history of colonization in “New England” and the history of colonization in Norwegian Sápmi. Another is the violence that characterized early encounters—indigenous people were regularly abducted into slavery, even before 1620 (Newell 2015)—and that erupted into an armed resistance movement, often called King Philip War, in 1675.²⁷ By that time, Indigenous people across different political formations and family lines were beginning to understand themselves as a group, in terms not of racial

²⁷ “King Philip” is the name English colonists used for Metacomb, the son of Massasoit, who had initiated the peace compact with the English in 1620.

categories based on inherent nature as the English did, but in terms of a shared experience of colonization and a shared fate within the racial hierarchy imposed by the English (Brooks 2018, 190–191).²⁸

During and after the conflict, even individuals who had taken up the Christian religion and formally allied themselves with the English settlers of the Massachusetts colony were subject to new and dramatic restrictions on their movement. They were apprehended, confined, surveilled, and threatened with death if they were caught outside a small set of approved settlements, unless accompanied by or “in the service of” an Englishmen (Brooks 2018, 174). After the conflict, only four of the fourteen Praying Towns were re-established. Some former inhabitants returned to those places to regroup after their internment over winter in abysmal conditions on Deer Island in Boston Harbor (DeLucia 2012). Those Nipmucs who had not been “Friend Indians” during the conflict could not easily avail themselves of this option. Some fled to the north, to Penacook territory, others south to Mohegan or west to Mahican neighbors at Schaghticoke. Still others turned themselves in as war captives at colonial centers (H. Pezzarossi 2020, 130). Colonial authorities sold “war captives” into slavery in the Caribbean or sentenced them to a fixed period of “involuntary indenture” in English households (H. Pezzarossi 2020, 130–146, citing Lauber 1913, 129; Warren 2017).

And yet, despite this early history, forms of colonial acknowledgment of “Indians,” or at least of the “Friend Indians” who had settled at Praying Towns, continued into the 18th century and beyond. For the most part, the formal traces of this acknowledgment of difference consist of the records about colonial authorities’

²⁸ The conflict and its effects have been the subject of much historical scholarship (e.g. Lepore 1999; Brooks 2018; DeLucia 2018).

involvement in the sale of Indigenous lands; lands in the Praying Towns were granted to their inhabitants, at first for common management and then individually (O'Brien 2003). As land passed out of Indigenous hands in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the documentation of Indigenous peoples' presence in the region changed, a change that was, for many years, interpreted as their disappearance from their homelands (Doughton 1997). However, more recent scholarship suggests that the relocation of Nipmuc people to cities and their travel throughout the region was a way to maintain relationships across regional networks and reflected their involvement alongside white and Black neighbors in the urbanization of the region in the 19th century (H. Pezzarossi 2020). The narrative of disappearance was rooted in changes to how Indigenous people appeared in the record and also related to colonial, and later American, assumptions that Indigenous people would "fade away" to make way for American manifest destiny (O'Brien 2010).

The continued involvement of authorities in the management and mismanagement of Indigenous lands and funds into the 19th century was a cause for concern among Massachusetts public and officials of the time. This concern sparked a series of reports on the situation of "Indians" in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Bird 1849; Earle 1861). White enthusiasm for citizenization as part of a broader political agenda grew in Massachusetts throughout the 1860s. By the end of the decade, all those who had been legally classified—in a way *recognized*—as Indians were made citizens through an act of the state legislature. Citizenization marked an end to the protected status Indians had long lived under and also removed the protective effect that corporately held land had in protecting Indian lands from sale to or seizure by whites (Plane and Button 1993, 591).²⁹

²⁹ Though this move was supported by some of those affected, it was opposed by many. Because women did not yet have the right to vote in Massachusetts, Native women who lived in landed communities lost the

While these changes were, ironically, part of a progressive politics of the time that saw wardship status as backward, they were also the result of the stance among whites in Massachusetts that Indian communities were too mixed to be considered truly Indian and were better viewed as a part of “the colored races” of the region.³⁰

In the 20th century, Native people in New England continued to struggle with social misrecognition in terms of the racial binary of the dominant society. In the early 20th century, many tribes in the region asserted their Native identities, in contrast to others’ perceptions that they were indistinguishable from the Black population to whom many were linked by kinship and association (McMullen 1994, 1996a, 1996b). Beginning as early as the 1930s, when attitudes toward Indigenous self-government had changed for the better at the national scale (Kehoe 2014), some groups included political activity as part of their strategy to organize tribal government in a more recognizable way (McMullen 2002, 282). Efforts toward more clearly recognizable political forms appear among Nipmucs around midcentury (Gould 2010, 2020). Not long after, Nipmuc leadership engaged with national-scale organizing around the problems encountered by groups lacking clear acknowledgment from the federal government (Hauptman and Campisi 1988).

Just as the 1960s had seen a cultural resurgence among Sami people in Norway, so too did this period see a cultural renaissance and publicly declared pride in Native

rights to political participation they had had within their own communities and gained no influence in politics through citizenship (Plane and Button 1993).

³⁰ I draw this wording directly from a quote from a white informant (Lyman) to Massachusetts Indian Commissioner Earle in 1859, cited in Plane and Button 1993, 595) to emphasize how this perception shaped the records produced during this period, even those state-appointed authorities. It was not only those communities understood as “mixed” who were targeted during this period; Indigenous communities in New England were targeted as well, a history that has been explored most thoroughly in the neighboring state of Vermont, rather than in Massachusetts (see Gallagher 1999).

American identities in the United States.³¹ This shift helped fuel a nascent “national recognition movement” (Klopotek 2011, 23), through which non-federally recognized tribes and their allies among federally recognized Indians pursued solutions to their exclusion from federal programs, services, and unique Indian rights like the right to have collective lands held in public trust by the federal government.³² The rise of the national recognition movement coincided temporally with the Red Power movement and militant activism of the 1970s, which drew greater public and political attention to the situation of the country’s first peoples.³³ During the 1970s, American Indian efforts at reform within the system took place alongside demonstrations and protests that sought to draw attention to the ongoing presence of Native Americans, even in places like the New England states, where initial European colonization dated back 250 years.³⁴

Amidst this public attention and widespread sympathy for the position of Native Americans, state governments in New England declared their ongoing recognition of tribes in their states and made new efforts to involve them in decision making. Both the states of Massachusetts and Connecticut established Commissions on Indian Affairs made up of representatives from state-recognized tribes; however, only one of these included Nipmuc people as a state-recognized tribe. In 1973, Connecticut’s legislation

³¹ See Klopotek (2011, 31), Lurie (1961), and Levine and Lurie (1968) on a renaissance or renascence among American Indians in the 1960s.

³² I draw the term “national recognition movement” from Klopotek’s *Recognition Odysseys* (2011, 31), but the concept of such a movement is clearly articulated much earlier by Hauptman and Campisi (1988).

³³ See Josephy (1999), Shreve (2011), and Blansett (2018) on the Red Power movement and Levine and Lurie (1968) and Klopotek (2011) on the links between American Indian activism around political recognition and the cultural renaissance or “renascence” of the same historical moment. Riggs (2000) and describe American Indian political and economic aims leading up to the 1970s. Contributors to Cobb and Fowler’s (2007) volume *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism* explain how 20th century American Indian politics both enabled and extends beyond Red Power.

³⁴ See, for example, scholarship (Black 2009), organizational history (James and Munro 1998), and public history (Mass Historical, n.d.) texts on the First Annual Day of Mourning in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1970 and the ongoing repetition of this protest on Thanksgiving Day each year since then.

recognized only those five tribes with reservation lands in the state, thereby excluding Nipmuc people (Reinhart 2002).³⁵ When the Governor of Massachusetts issued an executive order affirming the state's ongoing recognition of specific Native American groups in 1974, the Nipmuc tribe appointed the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Tribal council as a counterpart to state agencies on matters affecting Nipmucs (Dukakis 1976).³⁶

New England tribes did not slow their quest for recognition at the news of these state-level developments; they continued to seek federal recognition. Throughout the 1970s, New England tribes participated in protests (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013; A.M. Johansen 2013), brought cases to court challenging their lack of federal protections (*Joint Tribal Council of the Passamaquoddy v. Morton* 1975 F.3d 370, 1st Cir.) and participated in a congressional inquiry into the situation of US Indigenous groups that lacked federally recognized status (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976; Kickingbird 1975). The recommendations that emerged from the congressional inquiry were not, however, passed into law. They were taken up, and slightly modified, in a regulation drafted by the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1978. This new regulation laid out a process by which as-yet-non-federally recognized tribes could petition the BIA for acknowledgment (25 CFR § 54).

³⁵ See also Blumenthal (2002) on the State of Connecticut's opposition to Nipmuc acknowledgment. By contrast, see Van Voorhis (2003) on the support for the Nipmuc bid for recognition from state political figures in Massachusetts.

³⁶ This complexity of the political situation among Native American groups in the state is visible when reading between the lines of the executive order. The Nipmuc situation, in which the Hassanamisco tribal council was appointed to represent Nipmuc people (not all of whom were most closely associated with Hassamesit as opposed to other historical Nipmuc communities) is one sign of the difficulties. The explicit reference to Hassanamisco is most likely a result of the concerted engagement of Zara CiscoeBrough, a Hassanamisco Nipmuc, on the issue of state recognition. CiscoeBrough went on to become an influential early member of the Massachusetts Council on Indian Affairs (MCIA) where she pursued a number of issues including housing, education, and social services (See Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980).

Although there had been some earlier attempts in the courts and in legal writings (Cohen 2012 [1942]; Quinn 1990) to delineate the essential qualities of an Indian tribe, the federal acknowledgment regulation of 1978, with its seven criteria, presented the most explicit legal model of tribal authenticity created until that time (see also Quinn 1990 and Riley 2016). By a “legal model,” I mean that this regulation spelled out specific criteria by which an evaluator—the staff at the federal acknowledgment office—could determine whether or not a petitioning group should be acknowledged as an Indian tribe. Such an explicit model, linked to the formal, legally important status of “federally-recognized tribe” did not exist prior to 1978.

Only tribes not yet recognized were asked to meet the new criteria. They were required to provide a substantial collection of documentary evidence to support their case. The seven original criteria cover, in brief:

- (a) The ongoing identification of the group as an “Indian entity,”
- (b) The ongoing existence of the group as a community since European contact,
- (c) The exercise of political authority or influence by the tribe over its members,
- (d) Governance procedures expressed in a governance document or written down and submitted as a part of the petition and rules about membership,
- (e) That tribal members must descend from a historical member of the tribe,
- (f) That the membership of the petitioning group cannot overlap with the membership of an existing federally recognized tribe, and
- (g) A final rule specifying that tribes that have already been terminated by Congress cannot seek to be reinstated through the petitioning process.
(Paraphrased from CFR 25 § 54)

The Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA), within the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), under the Secretary of the Interior, applies these criteria when they evaluate researched petition documents that tribes are compelled to submit when seeking

administrative acknowledgment. OFA staff includes historians, genealogists, and anthropologists. The regulation that outlines the criteria (CFR 25 § 83) also empowers the OFA to make evaluations of whether tribes meet the criteria through the application of professional standards in these three disciplines.

In much the way that the criteria of the Sami Act comprise a legal model of an Indigenous individual, the US federal acknowledgment regulation comprises a legal model of an Indigenous collectivity, articulated in an explicit set of criteria by which to assess tribes' eligibility. However, as is clear at a glance at these two texts, the criteria themselves are quite different. In Norway, in a way that would not surprise anthropologists studying language ideologies in Europe (e.g. Silverstein 1996; Gal 2001; Irvine 2001; Irvine and Gal 2012; Urla 2012), language is taken as a paramount indicator of cultural, and especially ethnic, identity. Descent, the other chief factor included in the Norwegian Sami Act, is often explicitly linked to language in the Norwegian context. In the Sami Act, a Sami language must be the "home language" (*hjemmespråk*) of the applicant. Another popular way of describing such a native tongue is "mother tongue" (*morsmål*), an expression frequently used in Norway. The criteria of the Sami Act draw on ontologies that are widely shared in the societal context of Norway, both among Sami citizens and ethnic Norwegians.³⁷

In contrast, the US federal acknowledgment criteria steer scrupulously *away* from widespread social models of Indigenous authenticity. Non-federally recognized tribes seeking acknowledgment from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) earlier in the 20th century had run against the use of racial criteria, both as drawn from federal employees'

³⁷ See Gullestad (2002) on these family metaphors for national belonging among ethnic Norwegians and Lien (2018) on the parallels between Sami nationalism and Norwegian nationalism.

own mental models and from the explicitly racist standards and practices of physical anthropology (Lowery 2013). The new criteria created in 1978 avoided any mention of expectations around individuals' physical appearance. They took recourse instead in the professional standards of cultural anthropologists, historians, and genealogists, applying these not to applicants' bodies but instead to bodies of historical documentation and, to a lesser extent, to oral tradition and contemporary cultural practices (CFR 25 § 83).³⁸ As we will see later, this did not vanquish racial determinations from the process; however, it did mean that race was made to enter through a back door, rather than comprising the very content of the legal models' explicit criteria.

Once the new federal acknowledgment process was established, Nipmucs, like many other Indigenous people in New England, were quick to engage with the possibility of federal acknowledgment. The BIA had already received a letter of intent to petition from Hassanamisco Nipmuc Zara CiscoeBrough in 1980, and a first report on Nipmuc history was written in the early 1980s by a historian working with CiscoeBrough (Reno 1984). Unfortunately, the process proved to be burdensome, lengthy, and difficult (Campisi and Starna 1999). Originally, Nipmucs tried to organize their acknowledgment effort through Nipmuc Nation, a political formation meant to bring together all Nipmuc groups under a single petition for acknowledgment. However, within a year of the submission of a full petition document in 1995, the group had already fractured. Nipmuc

³⁸ Rather than employing widespread social models as its source of legitimacy, the federal regulation drew its legitimacy from expert determinations of meaning. See Manning (2012, 8–10) on the role of expertise in classification and Goodman et al. (2014) and Nakassis (2013) on citation of authoritative sources.

Nation became “Petitioner 069A” and the group that split off became “Petitioner 069B,” to be evaluated separately by the same federal office.³⁹

In the final days of the Clinton administration, Nipmuc Nation (Petitioner 069A) received a positive preliminary determination in response to their 2001 petition. The incoming Bush administration retracted those decisions just weeks later, an example of how the process, located under the executive branch, differed substantially between different presidential administrations during the decades of its existence (Riley 2016). Nipmuc Nation redoubled their efforts to document their history and membership in terms of the criteria, and those who worked most closely on the petition were confident they would meet with success (Gould 2013, 214). They were surprised—and many were devastated—by a 2004 negative “final determination.” An official decision by the OFA stated that the group did not fulfill three of the criteria required for acknowledgment as an Indian tribe. Nipmuc Nation pushed back against the decision for more than a decade, entering federal appeals court in 2014 (Convey 2014). The tribe exited the appeals process after their most-recent unsuccessful appeal in 2018 (*Nipmuc Nation v. Zinke* US District Court D, Mass.).

Research Design

These two contexts and the social and legal models of Indigeneity at work in them are quite clearly different from one another. Yet, as I outlined above, the two cases also involve the same universalistic concepts (Indigeneity, recognition), follow parallel

³⁹ These events are described from the federal perspective in the Final Determination on the 069A petition (DOI 2004); further documentation, in the form of letters to the agency, are available on the BIA’s website under the pages for Petitioner 069A (<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/ofa/069a-npmcna-ma>) and 069B (<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/ofa/069b-wbdnip-ma>).

historical timelines, and even feature similar developments along the way. Setting these two cases alongside one another provides a richer portrait of the range of experiences located under the global category “Indigenous,” including, as highlighted here, Indigenous experiences of recognition.

In examining Sami and Nipmuc histories of recognition in Norway and the US, I make a further specification, looking at both the *social recognizability* of Indigenous peoples as distinct social kinds and the *political recognition* of their rights and status. As I have described above, in each context social models of Indigeneity link a model of identity to everyday, commonsense criteria for the detection of particular social kinds, rooted in assumptions about what kinds of people there are in the world, what kind of setting one expects to encounter them in, and by what signs one can know them.⁴⁰ Legal models of Indigeneity—the specific sets of criteria included in laws or regulations—draw on but also depart from these social models. Social models of identity are read for fractional congruence; sets of signs are evaluated together to form an overall impression that remains open to new information and conflicting impressions. The very criteria of social models change over time (Agha 2007), at sociohistoric and local scales (Wortham 2006), and based on the setting (or context) in which signs are being read. Legal models, to the contrary, use fixed criteria, inscribed in law or regulatory texts, and they seek to make final determinations about the identities of individuals or groups for the purpose of the state.

⁴⁰ See Kockelman (2013) on the detection of social kinds in accordance with sets of assumptions that social actors bring to their encounters with others (their *ontologies*, in Kockelman’s terms) and Wortham (2006, 32–33) on how metapragmatic (Silverstein 1993) or metacultural (Urban 2001) models constrain the possible meanings that can be read from any given semiotic encounter.

In this dissertation, I examine Nipmuc and Sami experiences of recognition alongside one another in order to generate insights about the relationship between social and legal forms of recognition, including how this relationship may differ in distinct historical and lived contexts. In order to access the origins and the workings of legal and social models of Indigeneity, I conducted historical, ethnographic, and policy research on Sami and Nipmuc histories with state and societal recognition and I sought to examine how Sami and Nipmuc people understand and experience recognition today.

Research Questions

In this research, I was guided by three empirical research questions, which directly informed my gathering of the research materials and the analyses I present in this dissertation. The first two focus on how Indigenous people experience recognition and, at times, resist the terms of recognition available to them within their own societal contexts: How do Sami and Nipmuc experiences of state and societal recognition in the past affect their experience of their Indigenous identities today? Relatedly, despite the constraints that others' models of Indigeneity impose, how do Sami and Nipmucs challenge or resist forms of state and societal recognition today? Though I began with these two questions, I realized early in this research that in order to effectively trace experiences of recognition, I had to account for the fact that the meaning of recognition—and the institutions, resources, and so on attached to it—had shifted over the course of the decades-long period that I address in this dissertation. Therefore, I had to answer a third question: How have the meanings and entailments of political recognition changed within these two

contexts, even as the political forms of recognition (and their criteria) remain, for the most part, static?

Scholarly debates about recognition at the turn of the 21st century are rooted in how mid-20th century anticolonial intellectuals put European philosophy to the test in terms of the lived experiences of colonized subjects seeking to break free of the constraints of colonization (Fanon [1952] 2008). My work follows in this anticolonial tradition and the way anthropologists have built on it to analyze recognition as a field of power that extends beyond the contexts governed by forms of official recognition and their criteria (e.g., Povinelli 2002; Hankins 2014; Simpson 2014). I center my empirical research questions on how Indigenous people have experienced recognition to move away from assumptions about what recognition is or does and toward accounts of how people live through social and political acts of recognition and non-recognition. Ethnographic and ethnographically informed historical accounts provide evidence counter to the assumptions inherent in the idea that the state could implement measures that would “recognize” stigmatized groups once and for all, solving problems of “misrecognition” (Taylor [1992] 1994). By examining Indigenous experiences of recognition ethnographically and historically, I demonstrate that the outcomes of the introduction of official forms of recognition have varied; they are notably open to historical contingency.

On another level, I examine the relationship between the legal models of Indigeneity articulated in the Sami Act and federal acknowledgment regulation and the models of Indigenous identity circulating among Indigenous people themselves and in society at large. Policymakers, commentators, and even scholars writing on Indigenous

and minority rights often frame the very *enactment* of policies as an indicator of progress, rather than studying these measures' involvement in how social identities are inhabited and perceived in the long term. Like early advocates for state forms of recognition (e.g., Taylor [1992] 1994), they assume that the outcomes of such policies are knowable before they are introduced. They assume that state forms of recognition can cause specific societal changes, eliminating “misrecognition” once and for all.

As the empirical chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate, this is not how models of identity (or any other cultural models) work, and it is not how the introduction of legal models of Indigeneity has worked either. The written criteria for official recognition named explicitly in law or policy do not circulate in ways that translate to widespread public uptake. The effects of existing policy and legal measures are governed by historical contingencies as well as by persistent ontologies and the sociohistoric models—widely recognizable figures of personhood—that are the subject of these sets of assumptions. Even as legal models are instituted as a way to determine identity once and for all, the very nature of human social and cultural life makes such certainty an impossibility.

In addition to the three empirical research questions that are the focus of this dissertation, I also pay attention to an additional, more theoretical question about the relationship between social and legal models of identity. How are everyday social recognition and official political recognition related to one another over the longer-term life of these policies? For instance, how might the existence of authoritative legal criteria help to concretize models of identity that feature similar criteria? Alternately, how, by making models of Indigeneity explicit, might laws and regulations open long-naturalized

models of identity to challenge and critique? All cultural models are reproduced and transformed through their use and through metasemiotic discourse (reflexive reanalysis) about their meanings, uses, legitimacy, and so on. The introduction of legal models of Indigeneity backed by the power of the state is bound to have some impact on the sociohistoric models of identity that guide peoples' perceptions of Indigenous authenticity in other settings. Just the same, as cultural models of Indigeneity change through their use over the decades, they might come to further ratify legal models or they might depart from the criteria in legal models, leaving the legal definitions open to critique. In the chapters of the dissertation, I trace how these effects play out at the decades-long timescales that have elapsed since the introduction of the Sami Act and the federal acknowledgment regulation.⁴¹

In this dissertation, I do not attempt to definitively answer this question about the nature of the relationship between social and legal models of identity. My two cases cannot stand in for all legal models of Indigeneity and, moreover, legal models of Indigeneity are not the only such models employed by state actors today.⁴² Instead, I seek to provide evidence as to the relationship between social and legal models in the two cases I studied and to suggest how these insights can inform the study of the relationship between legal and social models of identity more generally, for the variety of identity categories states endeavor to define and administer.

⁴¹ I draw the concept of timescale from Lemke (2000); it is discussed further in Chapter 2.

⁴² For instance, Fuglerud (2004) writes about legal models of the category "refugee," although he does not address overtly this bureaucratic category's relationship to models circulating in society.

Theoretical Grounding

Semiotically informed anthropological theoretical and analytical approaches provide the foundation for my pursuit of both the empirical and theoretical questions that organize this dissertation. Anthropological understandings of how concepts emerge from social life and then come to structure it provide the springboard for my intervention into the usual debates over politics of recognition. I follow Agha (2007) in approaching events where people produce meaning as semiotic events. All cultural models (ideas, concepts, ontologies, registers, social personae, etc.) are products or precipitates of semiotic (which is to say meaning-making) activity. I draw on linguistic anthropologists' work on "the political organization of signifying practices" (Eisenlohr 2006, 18), adapting existing analytical approaches to examine the figures of personhood that are presupposed in interaction rather than focusing on the behavioral repertoires through which the identities of interactants are communicated. As I discuss at greater length in Chapter 2, in this dissertation I pursue a study of the political organization of signification, considering all constituent signs linked to particular models of identity, whether those signs are linguistic or behavioral indexes or another type of sign, consisting instead of features of embodiment, associations, or more complex signs. Anthropologists that examine meaning in social life from a semiotic standpoint, draw on the baseline assertion of 19th-century theorist Charles Sanders Peirce: "a sign is something which stands to somebody for something . . . in reference to a sort of idea" (Peirce 1955, 99). Varying sets of assumptions about the relationship between signs and social types condition the meaning of a gesture, sound, color—any perceivable thing—can take on in the context of social life.

One major way I draw on existing scholarship in semiotic anthropology is through my concern with how cultural models circulate and are transformed in their circulation. Agha's (2007) account of how cultural models are open to transformation when they are presupposed in semiotic encounters and when they are reanalyzed in metasemiotic discourse was influential to the diachronic framing of this research project. I draw on Agha's mobilization of Peirce's theory of semiosis as a set of historical "chains of abduction" through which a range of cultural models are produced and transformed and through which people are connected to one another through their shared understanding of particular cultural models.⁴³

Building on this idea of historical chains of semiosis, I attend to the ways that social and legal models of Indigeneity are constructed, used, challenged, transformed, or concretized over time. Much of the well-known liberal discourse on politics of recognition lauds the introduction of recognition measures as a form of progress (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995; Government of Canada 2018). Taking a semiotic perspective, I agree that these interventions will have effects, but I also assert that these effects are historically contingent rather than knowable beforehand. In this orientation to recognition, I build on the emphasis on contingency and agency that has formed a continuous thread in semiotic anthropology from the earliest seminal publications in that field (Silverstein 1976) through to more comprehensive theoretical accounts published in more recent decades (Agha 2007). My ethnographic and historical examination of how recognition works over a timescale of decades reveals that the context in which recognition is discussed and enacted changes over time. Shifts in the meaning and

⁴³ See Gal and Irvine (2019, 14–16) for a succinct explanation of this element of Peirce's theory of semiotics and its advantages for anthropological inquiry.

entailments of political recognition, even when recognized status of a particular group has not changed, can change what recognition means and how people experience it.

At the same time, I see this dissertation as a contribution to a shift back toward an emphasis on perception, a key element of Peircean semiotics that has sometimes been overlooked because of linguistic anthropologists' traditional emphasis on individuals' conduct and agency. Select scholarship in semiotic anthropology today tempers linguistic anthropologists' long-established focus on agency to put more emphasis on perceiving subjects' contributions to the production of meaning (e.g., Gal and Irvine 2019). Recent scholarship in linguistic anthropology examines how individuals' agency is constrained by subtle but widespread modes of perception and naturalized ideas about social categories and the signs by which they can be known (Rosa and Flores 2017; Rosa 2020).

Such interventions come from scholars whose work comes out of lived experiences that are distinct from those of earlier scholars in the lineage. While early scholars in linguistic anthropology were overwhelmingly white Americans and, to a large degree, men, the field has gotten more diverse as it has expanded over the decades. More recent generations of scholars have drawn on their own life experiences and their antiracist and decolonial axiologies to center race, for instance, in analyses that earlier focused primarily on language ideologies, without much consideration of the other semiotic channels with which judgments about linguistic practices are often combined (Rosa 2019, 29; Rosa and Flores 2017; Lemon 2002). Drawing on the work of these scholars, in this dissertation I inquire how ontologies prevalent in the dominant society shape how Indigenous people are perceived and what impact this has on their experiences

of Indigenous identities and the forms of official recognition they benefit from, contend with, or reject.⁴⁴

Studying Recognition Across Two Research Contexts

In this dissertation, I focus on the interdependency between legal models of Indigeneity and the broader organization of signification around Indigeneity (which includes but also exceeds the determinations of Indigeneity guided by legal texts and associated administrative processes). In order to gather together materials that can illuminate Indigenous experiences of recognition and the relationship between legal models of Indigenous identity and the broader production and transformation of social models of Indigenous identity within US and Norwegian settings, I undertook 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork and legal and archival research in each of the two research contexts at the heart of this dissertation, alternating between Norway and the United States during a period of three years (2016–2019).⁴⁵

In each of these two research contexts, my work spanned a number of field sites, as I traced recognition routes between Indigenous homelands and national capitals, conducting interviews, doing participant observation, and undertaking legal and archival

⁴⁴ Here, as throughout the dissertation, I use “ontologies” as it is used by Kockelman (2013, 150–151) to refer to sets of assumptions, especially about the existence, nature, and detectability of kinds.

⁴⁵ I was in Norway, with a brief trip over the border to neighboring Finland, from January through April 2016 for preliminary research, building my network of Nipmuc contacts and clarifying the comparative research design throughout the rest of 2016. In 2017, I continued to work on laying the foundations for the project through desk research in the US and through a field trip to Norway in July 2017 and then returned to the New England part of the project before departing for Norway again for a period of fieldwork in December 2017 to June 2018. I completed the interviews that feature prominently in the Nipmuc chapters of this dissertation in fall-winter 2018, traveling around the region and to major cities to conduct the interviews. From January to August 2019, I returned to Norway for a final stint of research; I was based in Tromsø and did interviews in Oslo and archival research in Oslo and Kautokeino as well. Upon returning from fieldwork in Norway, I began to analyze the empirical materials from both cases, which led me to seek additional historical materials related to the Nipmuc case; fortunately, I was able to access them online during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

research. Rather than focusing the fieldwork on a single central site, I examine models of Indigeneity across a range of sites within the two national domains that feature in the comparison I construct. I include textual sources (historical, policy, and legal documents) as well as participant observation and interviews because of the need to access the content and context of both legal models of identity and social models of identity, as well as research participants' reflections on how they have experienced and continue to experience recognition and what recognition has meant to them.⁴⁶

The fact that this research brings together two distinct empirical contexts to examine a central phenomenon across them requires the construction of a particular positionality for the researcher (Haraway 1991), an element of the project I discuss further in Chapter 2. While I believe a two-sited project has unique advantages for my aims, bringing these two stories together in a single dissertation necessarily limits the depth of detail I can include about each of them. I had to choose selectively what to include in this dissertation. I was guided by my research questions and my goals with this project, as well as the ethical values that shaped this research (described in more detail in Chapter 2). Nonetheless, decisions about what to include here were difficult to make. I hope my selections manage to convey both the dilemmas Sami and Nipmuc people have faced and their ingenuity in facing them, which has made it so that colonial attempts to define them once and for all remain the subject of contestation and critique. Despite legal criteria for recognition that have now been in place for decades, the negotiations of Indigenous authenticity and state legitimacy that they entail are far from settled.

⁴⁶ Semiotic encounters are not just face to face (Agha 2007, 8–12). I expand on this further in Chapter 2.

Outline of the Chapters

In Chapter 2, “Theory and Method,” I review the theoretical underpinnings of my approach and the methods by which I completed my research and analysis. I detail how I approach Indigenous recognition by following legal and social models of Indigeneity, an approach I describe as the study of the political organization of signification. I outline the epistemological grounds that inform my methods for gathering and analyzing empirical materials and writing the dissertation from the broader whole of my fieldwork.

In Chapter 3, I move into the presentation of empirical materials. I begin from my interviews with Nipmuc interlocutors in 2018. Through an analysis of their understandings of recognition, I establish that the concept of recognition among Nipmuc people draws on ideas circulating at the national scale, both those that define national discourse on federal acknowledgment in the present and earlier ideas that link recognition to access to programs and services, which are evident at the national scale in the early 1960s, at the dawn of the national recognition movement among non-federally recognized tribes.

In Chapter 4, I follow up on the findings of Chapter 3 to examine how the meaning of recognition among non-federally recognized tribes changed from the early 1960s to the more recent period in which my Nipmuc interlocutors were personally involved. Because I established in Chapter 3 that the national scale was linked to the meanings taken up in the Nipmuc context, in Chapter 4, I draw on historical sources produced at the national scale, including testimony and recommendations from the American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIPRC) of the mid-1970s and the text of the federal acknowledgment regulation itself, published in the *Federal Register* in 1978

(25 CFR § 54).⁴⁷ Ultimately, in Chapter 4, I establish that the transformation of the predominant meaning of recognition among those involved in the federal recognition movement happened within the context of a new emphasis on federal recognition that emerged during the 1980s. During that time, many of the federal programs to which non-federally recognized tribes had had some form of access were reduced and dismantled, making acknowledgment even more important for non-federally recognized tribes. However, as I demonstrate through interview materials, the earlier desire to self-administer their own programs seems to have guided at least some Nipmuc engagements with federal programs related to acknowledgment as late as the late 1980s.

In Chapter 5, I analyze the interviews I conducted with Nipmuc people in 2018. While interviewees focused substantially on their experiences of the administrative federal acknowledgment process, they also spoke about their experience of their social recognizability as Nipmuc and as Native American and everyday recognizability—or lack thereof—was experienced in conjunction with their lack of federal recognition, both in the past and today. In their reflections on the federal recognition process, interviewees emphasized how their own understandings of key concepts featured in the regulation (things like community, political organization, and membership) conflicted with how these were understood by the federal acknowledgment office within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Many interviewees agreed that these tensions and gaps were an important element of the experience of the recognition process, and their efforts to meet those standards caused harm within the community. Interviewees understood receiving a

⁴⁷ The regulation has been updated on several occasions. See Riley (2015) for a history of this changes up to those included in the *Federal Register* in 2015 (BIA 2015). I do not, in this dissertation, address the details of additional proposed changes beyond that point in time, which followed on Nipmuc Nation's exit from the appeals process in 2018.

negative final determination and going on to live with non-federally recognized status as one way they were positioned at the bottom of hierarchies of authenticity among Native Americans. The fact that Nipmucs do not meet widespread racialized expectations about appearance forms a second element of marginalization. Initial hopes that federally recognized status could be cited to contest such determinations ultimately failed to materialize.

In Chapter 6, I shift to the Sami context in Norway. Here I examine how, unlike Nipmuc people, who have a difficult time making themselves legible in terms of the expectations of mainstream of US society, Sami people have clear ways of making a Sami nation a perceivable reality within their own societal context. I analyze how parallel ethno-nations are made perceivable at the Norwegian and Sami national days in Oslo and Tromsø, during my fieldwork in 2016–2019. The celebrations and semiotic activity around and leading up to them involve the visibilization of complementary metapragmatic models, one Sami and one Norwegian, both enabled by the naturalization of a link between ethnicity and nationality. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the condition for the legibility of Sami political claims rests on this foundation of social recognizability in terms of metasemiotic schemes that are already widely understood in Norway, in part through near-universal participation in celebration of the 17th of May, the Norwegian National Day.

In Chapter 7, I turn back to the issue of the transformation of the meaning and entailments of recognition over time, taking up again the question with which I opened Chapter 3, this time in the Sami context in Norway. Rather than the historical approach I pursued in Chapters 3 and 4, in Chapter 7 I examine changes to the entailments of

recognition in the real time of the ethnographic present. I examine closely the historical precedents for an orientation to “Indigenous questions” that animates a particular space for work on Indigenous issues, the Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples (*Forum for Urfolk i Bistand*) at University of Tromsø. In the present of 2016, the Forum is ending as a result of the withdrawal of state support. The conflicts between longtime Forum members and representatives of the Norwegian state during the two-day-long final meeting of the Forum reveal how some of the outcomes of state recognition are vulnerable to erosion, even as the formal status of Norwegian Samis as recognized Indigenous people is not in question.

In the dissertation’s concluding chapter, Chapter 8, I turn to a comparative examination across the two cases, putting subgroups of the chapters (Chapters 3, 4, and 7 and Chapters 5 and 6) in direct dialog with each other. The first grouping reveals some commonalities about how political recognition of Indigenous peoples works, even across the many differences that characterize the two cases at the heart of this dissertation. My examination of Chapters 5 and 6, on the other hand, emphasizes contrasts between the two cases. I examine how it is not just the nature of the criteria inscribed in the Norwegian Sami Act and the US federal regulation that differ, the relationship between these legal criteria and the everyday criteria of social recognizability that comprise widespread ontologies also differ.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND METHOD

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I began by examining the two concepts, Indigeneity and recognition, that make the comparative framework of this dissertation meaningful. Then I introduced the two distinct research contexts that I bring together in this dissertation, the experiences of social and political forms of recognition among Nipmuc people in the United States and Sami people in Norway. In much of the dissertation, I will analyze the meanings and experiences of recognition among these two groups, both before and after the introduction of official forms of state recognition, including policies that articulate explicit legal models of Indigenous authenticity in order to control which groups and individuals are considered Indigenous for the purposes of the state. Before I proceed to that empirical content, here, in Chapter 2, I review in greater detail the theoretical foundations on which I built this dissertation, the epistemological orientation I employed in conducting the research, and the methods by which I gathered and analyzed the empirical materials I present in this dissertation.

Theoretical Foundations

Semiotic Encounters, Cultural Models, and Historical Chains of Semiosis

In this dissertation, I approach social and political forms of recognition—and the identities recognized—in terms of the semiotic processes that make recognition of identity possible. Like other anthropologists working in a semiotic theoretical framework, I view social relations as sets of connected semiotic encounters through which people create meaning and interact with one another. My framing follows Agha's (2007) in

Language and Social Relations. Agha's account of meaning in social life is based on the theoretical work of 19th century semiotician Charles Peirce and extends key topics in linguistic anthropology to apply them to both linguistic and other than linguistic pragmatic conduct. In Agha's parlance, any instance of perception and construal is a semiotic encounter. Semiotic encounters can be embodied, face-to-face encounters, but those are a special case. What makes something a semiotic encounter? In a semiotic encounter, "a particular sign-phenomenon or communicative process connects persons to each other" (Agha 2006, 10). People engage with each other by engaging with signs that connect them in and across semiotic encounters; this is why sign relations are central to social life. The umbrella term "semiotic encounter" encompasses both pragmatic encounters in which certain perceivable things are taken as signs (e.g., signs marking a certain social identity) and interactions that involve metapragmatic characterization of the link between certain object-forms and meanings as they occur in context in social life; such instances of reflexive reanalysis take place through pragmatic encounters of their own, most often through speech events.

Over the course of social life, at a range of scales, semiotic encounters of both these sorts are connected to one another in historical chains of semiosis. Such chains produce the semiotic resources that individuals draw on in their own actions and their perceptions and construal of others' conduct and appearances. In making determinations about which of the many perceivable things one encounters carry meanings as signs, and what the meaning of such signs might be, individuals can draw only upon their own ontologies, grounded in their individual histories of socialization (Kockelman 2013a, 2013b).

Following Agha (2007), I consider various abstractions that are produced through reflexive reanalysis to be *cultural models* (Kockelman's [2013] ontologies fit under this rubric as one sort of cultural model). Such reflexive models of social life, including social personae, registers of language and behavior, and models of identity, are products of semiotic encounters in two ways. First, people structure their enactments and expressions in terms of these models, which serve as the presupposed grounds for intelligibility. Metapragmatic models structure the context of a semiotic encounter in terms of a genre of event in which participants share some sense of appropriate action and expectations and the kind of social personae indicated by acting or appearing a certain way (Wortham 2006, 32–33; Silverstein 1993). All models, including models of identity, are only made perceivable through such pragmatic enactments. And yet, the meanings, structure, and component concepts involved in individual events are the result of *reflexive reanalysis*—talk about what signs have what effect in what context—through which they are shared and refined. All semiotic encounters also involve emergent aspects that can alter established indexical meanings mobilized in that event.⁴⁸ Those changes, if they are reproduced by others and circulated widely through metasemiotic discourse, can ultimately affect the nature of the models involved, through processes that Agha (2007) terms “circulation” and “transformation.”

Social Indexicality

This semiotic stance has been most fully elaborated within anthropology in the work of linguistic anthropologists. Linguistic anthropologists came to concepts from

⁴⁸ There is always the possibility for transformation of the existing enregistered meanings deployed because the context of an interaction is always different than any other before that (Agha 2007, 77). See also Silverstein (2003) on relatively presupposed or entailed indexes.

Peircean semiotics in the latter part of the 20th century in an effort to account for the social functions of language. By social functions of language, I mean the way in which the particular linguistic forms a person uses do more than just communicate referential content; they also become a locus of meaning through which social personae are attributed to the speaker (Silverstein 1976). Linguistic anthropology, as distinct from scholars in the discipline of linguistics, have long been interested in these social functions of language, not just its referential function (the capacity by which people can use language to *explain* the meaning of other linguistic utterances and other-than-linguistic semiotic events). Social function is accomplished through the use of distinct yet referentially equivalent linguistic forms that communicate something about the speaker, addressee, and other parties to a speech event.

Drawing on Peirce, Silverstein (1976) called the role of linguistic forms in pointing to social personae the “social indexical function” of language. For Peirce, indexical relations are meanings grounded in a real correlation between a certain sign and an object (smoke as a sign of fire is an indexical relation).⁴⁹ The social indexical function is premised on relationships of correlation between the use of certain linguistic sign-forms and the inhabitation or enactment of particular social personae (kinds of people that interactants understand to exist in the world or in a particular interactional context [Silverstein 1993]).

Over the decades, linguistic anthropologists have elaborated on this insight to explore indexicality across a variety of dimensions of social life, not just language. In

⁴⁹ See Manning (2012, 6–11) and Gal and Irvine (2019, 14–17) for two excellent short discussions of Peirce’s semiotics from an anthropological perspective or Chandler (2002) for a longer discussion of Peirce’s work that is not specific to anthropology.

fact, indexicality has become the primary focus of the subdiscipline. In 2016, 40 years after Silverstein introduced the term, the annual review of in linguistic anthropology suggested that the field was no longer united by the study of language in social life, but instead the study of indexicality in social life (Nakassis 2016). Nonetheless, despite the way this shift has broadened the study of indexicality, the majority of linguistic and semiotic anthropologists continue to focus on how human behavior (or conduct) creates perceivable forms that are received as indexical signs.⁵⁰

The Political Organization of Signifying Practices

An important focus of anthropological scholarship on indexicality has been an emphasis on understanding how indexical relations are organized. In order for a particular sign-form to signal a particular social persona, a series of assumptions are required about the particular communicative channel in question, the kind of social personae available to be enacted, and the relationship between the two. The introduction of the notion of social indexicality was accompanied by the idea that people act with intention regarding how others will perceive them, using preexisting metapragmatic knowledge (knowledge of how pragmatic, or indexical, signs will be understood in context) to inform their actions (Silverstein 1976). Since then, anthropologists have used several terms to describe the models that organize indexical sign relations, including metapragmatics (Silverstein 1993), metapragmatic models (Agha 2007), or metacultural models (Urban 2001).

⁵⁰ Even works that seem to be notable recent exceptions to this rule combine praise for the virtues of decentering language with whole chapters focused on linguistics (Gal and Irvine 2019, 15, 245–269).

The most extensive and best-known literature on metapragmatics is the language ideologies literature.⁵¹ This literature examines how people's beliefs about language shape language use in ways that have social and political consequences, often ones that favor some stances or groups of people over others. "Language ideologies" situate some linguistic practices as natural and others as marginal in ways that affect how language is used and the effects of that language use. Eisenlohr has described the anthropological literature on language ideologies as "the study of the political organization of signifying practices," emphasizing the field's interest in all kinds of communicative conduct, even as scholars in this area often maintain the stance that "the most central among these [is] language" (Eisenlohr 2006, 18).

It is important to be specific about what "ideology" means in the language ideologies literature and the semiotic ideologies literature that builds on it (Gal and Irvine 2019). Scholarship on language ideology does not normatively contrast ideology with real or true representations of social worlds, but rather seeks to study the "dialectic of social positionality, political interests, and knowledge production [that is] pervasive in many social contexts" (Eisenlohr 2006, 17).⁵² For those who use the term "ideology" to describe such metapragmatics, the term refers to the inevitability of any one formulation's empowerment of some over others. As Eisenlohr (2006, 18) puts it:

⁵¹ The literature on language ideologies is extensive and exceeds the segment of the field that builds on Silverstein's (1993, 2003) view of language ideology as one sort of metapragmatic. I do not review that literature in full here; that task has been taken on at various points in the past decades. In her comprehensive, though now somewhat dated review, Woolard (1998) frames the group of scholars following Silverstein as one of three major groups in the study of language ideologies or ideologies of language. See also Kroskrity (2000), which contains a number of chapters discussing some of the diversity within language ideologies scholarship collected into a single volume and Eisenlohr's (2006) introduction for a more updated review of the language ideologies literature.

⁵² This approach, unlike some other notions of ideology, has the advantage of being able to account for multiple and competing forms and practices of knowledge production, although, as noted below, some scholars avoid the term "ideology" because of its connections with such notions.

“Certainly, not all metapragmatics need be ideological, . . . but insofar as this process of contextualization sooner or later touches on political and social interests and conflicts, it ends up producing and reproducing ideology.” Thus, the ideological character of metapragmatics is relative. Some anthropologists steadfastly insist on the utility of thinking in terms of ideologies, in the sense of “networks of ideas and interpretive practices,” despite the confusion that can crop up around the term due to its disparate uses in other theoretical traditions (Gal and Irvine 2019, 12). Gal and Irvine (2019, 11–14), for example, insist that the utility of “ideologies” is the way the term keeps at the forefront of consideration the partiality of any particular view and that fact that there are already alternative readings, even where one view may appear to be hegemonic.

For others, however, the word “ideology” implies total naturalization. For this reason, some scholars direct their readers away from talking in terms of “ideologies” or “ideological schema” (Gal and Irvine 2019, 21) and toward more neutral terms like “models,” “frameworks,” “schemes,” “constructs,” (Agha 2007) or “ontologies” where “ideology” is located as one variation under that umbrella term (Kockelman 2013a, 2013b). These scholars point to the need to understand metapragmatics in terms of the processes by which they became naturalized, to whatever degree this is the case, and the ways, although limited, that they remain open to transformation. I take this latter direction in this dissertation, even as I draw on the literature on semiotic ideologies as part of the theoretical grounding for my study.

The language ideologies literature links the organizational or “regimenting” power of metapragmatics to the exercise of power, providing a potential model for how other metapragmatics—metapragmatics addressing other semiotic modalities, perhaps—

could work this way. To return to Nakassis's (2016) point, today the study of indexicality and how it is regimented, or organized, extends beyond studies of language. To an extent, the study of metapragmatics does, too. Agha's (2007) contribution of theorizing registers as models that tie sets of *behavioral* signs (linguistic, gestural, and so on) to social personae is one example of this trend. More recent literature on registers focuses on how registers, as cultural models, designate sets of behaviors and linguistic forms as indexes of particular social personae.⁵³ Where such social personae are taken to indicate the actual identity of an interactant, rather than, for example, someone doing an impression of someone else, we can think of registers as indexing models of identity.

However, as Agha (2007) has pointed out, models of identity draw on a range of kinds of signs, not just behavioral signs. Associations, appearances, and complex signs can all function as emblems, or signs of identity (Agha 2007, 233). Identity is of central importance in the forms of recognition that are the subject of this dissertation. When we approach identity from a semiotic perspective, identity is an *effect* of emblematic sign-processes, and such identities (as precipitates or products of semiotic activity) can only be studied through the emblematic sign-processes of which they are composed.⁵⁴ The

⁵³ Agha's (2007) most elaborate example is the register of "received pronunciation" in British English, which is associated with upper class social personae and which Agha demonstrates consists of more than just linguistic signs; it also includes gestures and comportment. He describes how the register was regimented and circulated through texts and teaching for those seeking entry and acceptance into higher class settings during the 19th century. A complex sign that might index the same persona but is not part of a repertoire because it is not a behavioral sign, could include association with objects, so that if someone is standing in a very posh sitting room while articulating the gestures and utterances associated with the register, the social persona is taken as a sign of their identity, rather than just a something they are "putting on." Though they are not explicitly mentioned in Agha's account, dress, appearance would also play a role, one can imagine, as might phenotypic appearance—none of these are behavioral signs but they are criterial signs that index certain models of identity.

⁵⁴ As Agha (2007, 235) has put it, "Identity is usable as an analytical term only if the rubric can be connected back to the processes through which the things it names get formed."

perception that particular identity are real categories is the result of what Bucholtz and Hall (2004) call naturalization, what Gal and Irvine (2019) call ideological work.

Centering Models of Identity

Unlike the many linguistic anthropologists who center behavioral repertoires—signifying practices—in their analyses, in this dissertation, I center the models of identity through which perceiving subjects read these and other signs. I consider the whole range of perceivable “things” that are taken as signs of identity; this means not just linguistic or behavioral forms, but also appearances, associations (a “contextual link” [Agha 2007, 243–244]), and complex signs, which are themselves products of component sign relations (Agha 2007, 235).⁵⁵ This is to say, I focus on the *model* in question rather than the repertoires or registers through which, in part, that identity is enacted and made legible.

In this dissertation, I focus on models of identity, what some anthropologists call figures (Harkness 2014; Park 2014; Simpson 2014);⁵⁶ models of personhood (Agha 2007, 252; mobilized to interpret ethnographic content in Rosa 2019, 101), social personae (Silverstein 1976; Agha 2007); or social categories (Eisenlohr 2006; Heller 2011; Rosa 2019). In particular, I focus on how widely held and often implicit models of Indigenous identity exist alongside and are affected by the explicit legal models of identity

⁵⁵ This wording, the particular use of the word “things” to refer to those perceivable things that become signs for a particular perceiving subject, traces back to the writings of Charles Peirce (e.g. Peirce 1998) and has been used by semiotic anthropologists since then, often interchangeably with the word “diacritics” in the writings of linguistic anthropologists (see, Agha 2007, 246–254 for an explanation of diacritics). When I use “things” in quotes, take it to mean perceivable things, in the sense of “diacritics.”

⁵⁶ As Park (2014) points out, “The idea can be traced back to the notion of figure as it appears in the work of Erving Goffman (1981), and further back to Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of *voice* and *chronotope* (1981, 1984).”

articulated in regulations like the Sami Act and the US federal acknowledgment regulation. Unlike many linguistic anthropologists who use a semiotic theoretical framework, I direct my attention to models more so than the repertoires of behavior linked to the model. I do this because in the case of models of Indigenous personhood, which have developed as an outcome of historical and ongoing colonization, many things taken as signs of Indigeneity from the perspective of the colonizer are *not* deliberate actions (are not part of a behavioral repertoire). Instead, they are perceivable traces of the way Indigenous people live their lives, which are taken, from an outside perspective, as signs of unequivocal social difference and often of inferiority as well.

Studying the Political Organization of Signification, Not Just Signifying Practices

In this one way, I shift the focus in my application of a semiotic theoretical framework from the most prevalent concerns of the linguistic anthropologists who have approached the study of social life from a semiotic standpoint. Nonetheless, other through-lines in this lineage in anthropological research are precisely applicable to my task in this dissertation. Linguistic anthropologists have addressed quite extensively how social indexical sign relations are shaped by and are a form of power relations at work through their accounts of “the political organization of signifying practices” (Eisenlohr 2006, 18). In this literature, anthropologists examine the role of ideology, and linguistic ideologies especially, in the production of sameness, difference and value.⁵⁷ In this dissertation, I seek to broaden this frame to include not just signifying practices but the

⁵⁷ See Woolard (1998) for a review of the different threads in this work and Eisenlohr’s (2006) introduction for a more updated review. Works that center around language ideology continue to be published closer to the present (e.g. Urla 2012), even as there has been a shift within “linguistic” anthropology toward analysis of other-than-linguistic elements of social life (Nakassis 2016).

other kinds of signs that are received as signs of identity. This necessitates a shift toward considering how the ontologies of perceiving subjects affect what is considered to be a legitimate criterion of membership in a particular identity category.⁵⁸

In the cases of recognition I am concerned with in this dissertation, Indigenous peoples do determine neither the terms nor the practices that are central to their legal recognition as Indigenous. And, as one can observe in even the brief descriptions of the two research contexts in the Introduction chapter, many of the criteria for the recognition of Indigeneity in both social and legal/political domains are not based in communicative behavior. Instead, the social and legal models are composed of (stated or implicit) criteria that involve appearances (or elements of embodiment), associations (with places, animals, plants, people, certain material culture), and other complex signs that are themselves the result of other sign processes (such as determinations of descent or community).

Agha (2007, 235) writes, “Important though they are, objects of sense perception are not the only kinds of perceivable things that have emblematic functions; things *denoted* by objects of sense perception can also have such functions.” In other words, things that are *themselves* the product or precipitate of sign functions can serve as emblems on another level. For instance, in the case of the rules of recognition I take up in this dissertation, descent may be considered an important factor for assessing Indigenous identity. This may be the case for evaluating membership in an Indigenous social category in which descent forms part of the grounds on which the category is

⁵⁸ This is what Gal and Irvine (2019, 167) call “ideological work”—where ideologies shape what perceivable things are interpreted as signs, often quite apart from intentionality on the part of a perceiving subject.

essentialized (see McMullen 2002; Valkonen 2014) or it may be an explicit factor in a legal model of Indigeneity, as it is in both the Sami Act and the US federal acknowledgment regulation. But genealogical descent—with the possible exception of some guesswork in the mode of reading a person’s perceivable physical features in light of any iconic relation to other known relatives—cannot be assessed from the signs immediately at hand in a face-to-face semiotic encounter. Instead, determinations of genealogical descent involve using other denotative utterances to verify a person’s kin relationships, such as birth records, church records, or census data. And this is only one example; there are many other situations in which the “things” taken as signs are themselves the products of longer chains of sign relations. There are many “things” that can function as diacritics wherever emblematic values are attached to them through their *treatment* as such in interaction and perception (Agha 2007). This creates a plethora of possibilities as far as *what* serves as a “thing” with an emblematic reading, where that sign vehicle appears, and to whom.

The fact that Indigenous recognition involves not only social models of Indigeneity, but also legal models, created distinct demands for studying recognition in Indigenous contexts. Therefore, though I draw on a theoretical foundation and analytical approaches elaborated in linguistic anthropologists’ study of the political organization of signifying practices, I do not characterize my own work as squarely fitting within the group of scholars studying the political organization of signifying practices. Instead, I characterize my approach as the study of the political organization of *signification*. This framing puts the focus of analysis equally on performance or enactment *and* the acts of perception and construal through which perceivable things come to serve as signs,

including as signs of identity. Though I do—as I must—consider behavioral signs and reflexive reanalysis, I also consider those perceivable things that are received as signs of identity by a perceiving subject, even though they are not issued or intended as such by the person on whom they come to bear.

Where scholars involved in the study of the political organization of signifying practices have been centrally concerned with linguistic ideologies, I broaden the frame, drawing on Kockelman's (2013a, 2013b) notion of *ontology*: a theory, expectation, or ideology about what sorts of indexical signs are associated with what (social) kinds.⁵⁹ The recognizability of others as members of certain social kinds depends on ontologies and their constituent assumptions, and, importantly, such assumptions or expectations can be altered through encounters with situations in which they prove unreliable or false (Kockelman 2013b, 151–152). All acts of perception also rely on semiotic ideologies (Keane 2018) and ontologies, even though these may not be made explicit in the course of the semiotic encounter in which they are mobilized. The perceivable things (diacritics) that appear in any given a semiotic encounter—even an embodied one wherein a person's actions are a *part* of what is perceived—exceed those over which a person acts with intention or exercises any real control. The models and modes of perception the perceiving subject brings to the encounter are important to what perceivable “things” are

⁵⁹ For Kockelman (2013b, 151) all such linkages between sets of signs and social kinds are ontologies, even though in particular contexts they go by many other names: “Such a set of assumptions might be called a theory (when articulated in relation to a scientific institution), a stereotype (when negatively valenced), a likelihood (when framed mathematically), a heuristic (when framed qualitatively, or as a ‘rule of thumb’), an imaginary (when understood in relation to an underlying account or narrative about the prototypic entities involved in the domain being judged), a culture (when more or less intersubjectively shared by a group of people), and even a habitus or ‘sense’ (when understood as a tacit intuition regarding another’s identity via their techniques of the body, styles of speaking, and so forth).” Many authors on ontology consider kinds of a wider variety, beyond the “social kinds” upon which Kockelman focuses. While I do think that ontologies can certainly incorporate other-than-human kinds, in this dissertation I focus on social kinds or social categories, so I ground my approach in Kockelman’s work on this narrower topic.

received as signs (Gal and Irvine 2019, 167–172). Such “things” can be taken as signs even where the person about whom they are taken as signs does not perceive them as such. Hence, it is important that the political organization of signification be approached with attention not just to signifying practices but also to perception.

My reframing of the question from the study of the political organization of signifying practices toward the political organization of signification dovetails with the recent shift among linguistic anthropologists from a longstanding concern with language ideologies toward a focus on raciolinguistic ideologies and the specific practices by which people are identified as belonging to one racialized category or another (Lemon 2002; Rosa and Flores 2017a, 2017b; Rosa 2019). The existing treatment of ideologies of race and how they affect the reception of linguistic utterances begins to get at the role of ontologies’ perceiving subjects’ anticipation of certain object signs (not all of which are behavioral; some are embodied signs or complex signs) to correspond to racialized social categories; these are inherently value-laden in the context of ongoing projects of white supremacy and colonization. In attempting my own particular research project within the frame of the political organization of signification, not just signifying practices, I attempt to bring into focus the ontologies (or ideologies) that scholars writing on raciolinguistic formations point to in their work. Therefore, I frame my empirical research questions around the transformation not just of models of identity but of experiences of, grounds for, and outcomes of recognition. I assert that recognition must be understood as a contingent outcome of processes of perception and construal that are themselves informed by ideologies that link social kinds, value, and signs-of-identity.

Framing the Project

In this dissertation, I examine how legal models of Indigeneity are enmeshed in complex relationship with the social models of identity that define the identity categories these policies aim to govern. I have studied these policies and models not only as they appear in texts, but also as they appear in everyday life and in a variety of mediated forms. I have done so through fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork and legal and archival research. My research design was deliberately recursive, such that I traveled back and forth between Norway and the United States for periods of 3 to 9 months during a period of three years (2016–2019).

In each of these two research contexts, my work spanned a number of field sites. Just as the recognition odysseys of Sami and Nipmuc people involved work at home, in national capitals, at government agencies and institutions of expertise, as well as in the streets, I too traveled between multiple sites in conducting this research. I combined interviews, participant observation, and legal and archival research to get a holistic understanding of the models of identity circulating within and across social worlds and how these related to the models of identity expressed in the Norwegian Sami Act and the US federal acknowledgment criteria. Rather than focusing the fieldwork on a single central site, I “follow the model”—my own adaptation of Marcus’s (1995) suggestion to “follow the metaphor”—across a range of sites.

Below, I describe how I construct the object of this research, following models, in Agha’s (2007) sense, across time, settings, and what are often thought of as different “data types.” I describe how this approach derives from the epistemologies and ethical commitments with which I align myself as an anthropologist and a researcher. I describe

the purpose and contributions of the two-sided approach I have pursued in terms of both the ethical orientations that guide my work and the kinds of sources I include among the empirical materials addressed in this dissertation. Finally, I describe the process of analysis and writing through which I produced the dissertation.

Following the Model Across Semiotic Encounters

A field *site*, in the sense of a single focal location, is not the organizing principle in this anthropological research project because I focused on models of identity and how they are articulated with reference to legally authorized models of Indigeneity (professional or technical discourse) and other public discourse on identity, Indigeneity, and belonging. Rather than organizing my inquiry around a single site,⁶⁰ I follow discourse about Indigeneity and enactments of Indigenous identity across multiple semiotic encounters, including both embodied interactions *and* other sorts of engagements with signs. In this sense, I follow the direction of scholars who “follow the model” across embodied encounters, mass-mediated discourse, and elicited reflexive reanalysis (as in interviews).⁶¹

⁶⁰ This *has* been done by some ethnographers writing in the same theoretical tradition (i.e., Rosa 2020; Wortham 2006), but in many cases these accounts deal much more extensively with local metapragmatic models than with the sociohistoric models that are drawn on within those local contexts.

⁶¹ Agha (2007) does this in Chapter 4 of *Language and Social Relations*, where he follows one particular register formation (received pronunciation) across a variety of signaling media, incorporating semiotic encounters that range from embodied encounters to the circulation of books about linking pronunciation, comportment, and class aspirations. While Agha (2007) follows a register formation (a model of social conduct), Heller et al. (2016) provide an example of following an identity formation as they follow francophone identities across a variety of sites in Canada, focusing on the production of language-related identity and social position in the context of work. Though I find no exact analogue for my approach here—Heller et al. (2016) focus substantially, though not exclusively, on embodied encounters—I do think these are examples of attempts to construct the field by “following the model.”

With this notion of “following the model,” I build on Marcus’s (1995) now-classic contribution on multi-sited ethnography. Marcus identifies six “modes or techniques” through which multi-sited ethnographies define their objects of study.⁶² Of these, my “follow the model” approach is a variation on “follow the metaphor,” Marcus’s term for a multi-sited project within which “the thing traced is within the realm of discourse and modes of thought [and] the circulation of signs, symbols, and metaphors guides the design of ethnography” (108).⁶³ My approach, “follow the model,” applies Marcus’s insights about the construction of the field in multi-sited work but adapts that discussion to align with a semiotic theoretical frame, in which social life is conceptualized as a series of semiotic encounters proceeding as links in historical chains of semiosis. Though I utilize a language of models, rather than ideologies, my approach has much in common with that of Gal and Irvine (2019, 167–172), as they seek to break away from the idea of a geographically bounded field site and pursue “sites of ideological work,” at which particular meanings and the logics that inform become accessible through semiotic activity.

Analytical Constructs for Connecting Research Contexts and Research Questions

In analyzing the relationship between social and political recognition from a semiotic standpoint, I found I need a way to refer to the distinct cultural models that

⁶² These are “follow the people,” “follow the thing,” “follow the metaphor,” “follow the plot, story or allegory,” “follow the life or biography,” and “follow the conflict” with an additional note on single-sited studies in which the object of the research is a broader system treated as accessible at a single site (Marcus 1995).

⁶³ I consider Agha’s (2006) Chapter 4 in *Language and Social Relations* to be an example of this approach, even though he does not name it as such. Where Agha follows a repertoire of behavioral signs that make legible a social persona (a register), I follow an identity. In Agha’s framing elsewhere in the book, it is clear that both identities and registers are “models” in his sense. Here, I simply name the approach that Agha already practices and apply it to a model of identity rather than a register.

implicitly and explicitly shape Indigenous recognition in my two cases. Here, I take a moment to explain more fully what I mean by “social and legal models of identity,” two original concepts I introduce in the research questions and use to parse and compare the empirical materials I analyze in the dissertation.

I use the first of these two terms, “social models of identity” to refer to the cultural models about social kinds that are put to use, and through that use transformed in the course of social life (in semiotic encounters and through the series of such encounters that comprise historical chains of semiosis). Such cultural models are how people “read” others in terms of their own mental models to make always-provisional judgments about who other people are and how to interact with them (Agha 2007, 239–240). These models link signs and qualities or categories, which can include abstractions that range from politeness to gender, race, and other sorts of identities that perceiving subjects understand to exist as a matter of ontology; what, in this dissertation, I often refer to as “social kinds” (Kockelman 2013a, 2013b).⁶⁴ Models organize a set of commonsense connections between certain signs and certain social types, with the caveat that other elements of context affect whether a person is taken as a legitimate bearer of an identity or an impersonator (Agha 2007, 250). Not all signs that are a part of a model are allocated equal importance; in such models, some signs may be taken as more determining or as better indicators of authenticity than others.⁶⁵ Models are the products of other semiotic activity both the pragmatic enactment of the identities that the model is about and metapragmatic and metasemiotic discourse through which people refine, debate, and

⁶⁴ See also Hacking (1990) on “human kinds” and Wortham’s (2006, 6–8) summary of this approach, integrating it with Agha’s work on cultural models.

⁶⁵ See Bucholtz and Hall (2004); Agha (2007, Chapter 5); Hankins (2014) on “definitional criteria,” and Kemi Gjerpe (2013) for a discuss of such models in the lives of Sami youth today.

circulate knowledge about the nature of social categories and the signs by which they might be known.

Models of identity have several key characteristics. Most often, they are applied implicitly in particular semiotic encounters, sometimes even outside the awareness of those using them to move from perception to understanding and to guide their own actions in an encounter (Silverstein 1976, 54). These models are only “fractionally congruent” (Agha 2007, 266–267) between individuals that apply “the same” model and as understood and applied by individuals over time. Thus, it is possible for many people to understand that a certain social kind exists (in Agha’s [2007] terms these are models with an extensive “social domain;” in Wortham’s [2006] they are sociohistoric models) but to understand its nature and the signs by which it is known in subtly different terms. While they can be discussed explicitly, such models are often implicit.

I build on the existing anthropological literature that understands identity in terms of models by observing that the criteria for evaluating Indigenous authenticity spelled out in laws and regulations are models, too. Like the social models described above, laws and regulations contain criteria that must be fulfilled through recourse to evidence. In this dissertation, I call the sets of criteria included laws and regulations “legal models of identity.” Legal models of identity have some similarities to social models of identity but are also different in significant ways. Most obviously, they are written down in explicit terms in legal and regulatory texts. Whereas social models of identity are always open to transformation through their use and through novel metasemiotic discourse about them, legal models can only be altered through specific processes that particular actors must

undertake, as prescribed within a particular political system. For example, according to Norwegian parliamentary procedures, only Parliament can alter laws (Stortinget 2021).

By making the “defining characteristics” of a particular social category explicit, legal models can provide the circumstances for a number of responses and effects. The existence of authorized and explicit models of identity may inspire people to begin to cite the legal model’s terms as the real terms by which Indigenous identities should be judged.⁶⁶ For instance, people may begin to insist, more so than before, that a Sami person must speak Sami at home based on the explicit description of this rule in the Sami Act’s voter registration criteria. On the other hand, by making definitional criteria explicit, such legal models may open what had been unspoken assumptions to targeted critique. Where legal models do not fully match up with the social models that continue to circulate and to be transformed in the wider terrain of social and political life, critique of the legal models is more common than subjecting social models to legal models’ terms.

A central task of this dissertation is to examine how individuals from two Indigenous groups experience recognition, both the social recognition, non-recognition, and misrecognition that is foundational to all social life *and* the forms of political acknowledgment that are particular to Indigenous peoples. Thinking of social and state-driven forms of recognition in terms of social and legal models provides a basis upon which to assess how social and political recognition are similar (for example, each uses definitional characteristics to make determinations) and how they are different (in terms of explicitness and fixity of their criteria, for instance). This pair of original analytical

⁶⁶ See Goodman et al. (2014) on citation.

concepts will reappear throughout this dissertation alongside and in conjunction with analytical concepts that derive from the theoretical literature in which I ground the dissertation, including indexicality, semiotic ideology, reflexive reanalysis (metasemiotic discourse), and historical chains of semiosis.

Epistemology and Ethics

Producing Situated Knowledge

My goal in this research is not to collect or recount all possible instances that bear upon the negotiation of Indigenous identities in the Sami and Nipmuc cases; that would be an impossible task. Instead, I examine instances that can help illuminate how a variety of such negotiations play out and play against one another. The situations, settings, and people I had access to during the research were necessarily shaped by my own positionality and were further refined through my own approach to conducting ethical research on Indigenous issues, from my own position as a non-Indigenous researcher and an outsider (in different ways) to the two Indigenous social and political contexts that are the focus of this dissertation.

The research presented in this dissertation employs long-established feminist notions of responsible—which is to say *accountable*—research as the foundation of its knowledge claims (Haraway 1991, 191). I take up Haraway's (1991, 190) now-classic stance that “feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated* knowledge,” meaning I do not strive to inhabit a view from everywhere and from nowhere. The view of recognition and experiences of Indigeneity articulated in this dissertation are the result of my cultivation of a particular vantage point on the problem, as formed in collaboration both

with Sami and Nipmuc collaborators, and with broader discussions of epistemology and ethical research both within the academy and beyond it. Part of Haraway's articulation of the need for conscious positioning in order to produce accountable knowledges is her assertion that "we [feminists] do need an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different—and power-differentiated—communities" (Haraway 1991, 187). My inclusion of two distinct research contexts, in dialog with one another, rather than just one, is an attempt to participate in the kind of partial translation that Haraway describes, not an effort at a comparative ethnology attempting to make universal claims about the nature or condition of humanity or some segment of it. I describe the specifics of my position vis-à-vis each of the two contexts for research at greater length in Chapter 2.

Research Ethics and the Object of Study

Working on a dissertation on Indigenous experiences of recognition over several years has afforded me the opportunity to take part, mostly as a listener, in a range of conversations about research ethics taking place not only in anthropology but in Native and Indigenous Studies as well. In my research praxis, I follow Atalay's (2020) emphasis on relationality, patience, empathy, and compassion, and listening, humility, and discomfort. Through Indigenous scholars' contributions on the impacts of social science for those communities that have often been the subject of it, I also understand that ethical decisions arise long before fieldwork begins. I have come to understand choice of the object of research, of what exactly the researcher will produce knowledge about, as a critical moment for ethics in research. My focus on official recognition as an object of research is a direct response to methodological interventions centered around the idea of

refusal, as articulated by North American Indigenous scholars outlining the possibilities for ethical research in settler colonial contexts. These scholars position refusal as an analytic practice and an expression of the ethical and even political commitments of the researcher (Simpson 2010, 2014; Tuck and Yang 2014a, 2014b). Their interventions inform my research design both in terms of what I take as the object of research within the broader field of possible approaches to Indigenous recognition and in terms of my decisions about what information to collect, report, and omit in this dissertation.

Two Roles for Refusal

The notion of ethnographic refusal originates in the work of Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2007, 2014) and has been taken up by a number of Indigenous anthropologists and social scientists in the years since Simpson introduced the term. Simpson elaborates her idea of ethnographic refusal in dialog with her fieldwork and longer-term lived experiences in Kahnawake, where people employ refusal to assert their identities, their sovereignty, and their relationships to each other and outsiders. For Simpson, ethnographic refusal is the refusal to push the colonial imperatives of anthropological ways of knowing and a way of respecting the limits of what can be said without crossing the limits that her interlocutors construct about what elements of their own experience they will share in the context of research.⁶⁷ She advocates conducting ethnographic research against both the representations in an existing ethnographic archive and the categorizations imposed by colonial legal frameworks. Thus, in Simpson's work,

⁶⁷ Simpson (2007, 78) suggests the ethnographer ask herself; "what am I revealing here and why? Where will this get us? Who benefits from this and why? And "enough" was when they shut down (or told me to turn off the recorder) or told me outright funny things like "nobody seems to know" – when everybody does know and talks about it all the time. Dominion then had to be exercised over these representations, and that was determined when enough was said."

as it is described (2007) and executed (2014), ethnographic refusal is an element of the carving out of research questions and the practice of research.

Simpson is not the only scholar to suggest that approaching research with refusal at front of mind is a productive approach to the study of settler colonial contexts. Other scholars who have worked with refusal since Simpson's introduction of the notion of "ethnographic refusal" have in common with Simpson a focus on working against colonial imperatives from the very earliest stages of research design. Tuck and Yang (2014a, 2014b) describe clearly the perverse motivations of much social science research, including how some knowledge is understood as intellectual property and other knowledge is positioned as naturally existing and even as-yet-undiscovered knowledge by virtue of being held by marginalized and oppressed populations, including Indigenous peoples. The academy's "unrelenting need to produce 'original research'" makes it a part of a colonial structure of invasion. The academic establishment seeks to expand the territory of its knowledge through social scientific knowledge practices that ask questions about marginalized and oppressed groups without giving them the due of their own agency and without positioning their current conditions as an outcome of relationships with colonizing power (Tuck and Yang 2014b, 813). In response to this status quo, Tuck and Yang propose refusal as an analytical approach and a guiding commitment for social scientists. Their refusal is not "seek[ing] an appropriate, non-problematic object of study, but... an ethic of studying to object" (Tuck and Yang 2014b, 814).

Tuck and Yang (2014b, 815, emphasis mine) suggest that "choosing to write... about power in the forms of *institutions, policy, and research itself*" can be a form and practice of refusal. They urge a "deliberate shift in the unit of analysis, away from

“people (and their ‘social problems’)” and toward the *relationships between people and institutions of power*” (Tuck and Yang 2014b, 815, emphasis mine), extending Simpson’s (2007) earlier call for an anthropology that focuses not on categorial difference but on relationships. My focus on Indigenous peoples’ experiences of recognition—and attention to those who are not centered in the terms of legal models of Indigeneity—is an outcome of my engagement with Indigenous scholars’ articulation of an ethic and analytic of refusal as well as with longer-established ideas in critical theory about studying social life from the position of the abject (Butler 1993a; Inoue 2006). I focus both on institutions and the developments within them *and* on Indigenous peoples’ firsthand accounts of what the processes and established rules have meant for them as a way to access “relationships between people and institutions of power.”

The Role of Comparison

Because the object of study in this dissertation is Indigenous recognition and peoples’ experiences of it, not the “people (and their ‘social problems’)” (Tuck and Yang 2014, 815), I include two distinct research contexts in the framing of the project in order to better capture some of the diversity of experiences of Indigenous recognition. Already, when I began this project, I had some experience with the difficulties that arise for Indigenous peoples whose territories are divided by contemporary settler state boundaries, positioning them as subject to distinct rules of recognition on either side of an imaginary line.⁶⁸ I designed this dissertation research to try to trace purportedly commensurable developments in the administration of Indigenous rights across two very

⁶⁸ In 2009–2015, I worked on a series of interrelated projects with Lakes/Sinixt people in British Columbia, Canada, Washington State, and on the reservation of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville (see Kowsz 2013, 2015).

different contexts in order to better illuminate the range of meanings and experiences engendered by the creation of new forms of “recognition” for Indigenous people in Norway and in the northeastern United States.

I struggled to find examples of comparative work of this kind in anthropology; I did find literature illuminating the advantages and best practices of comparative work on developments in law as they relate to society in other cognate fields. Though they do not use the exact language of the semiotic anthropology I draw on here, many of these scholars built on the related material-semiotic theories of Bruno Latour, giving their approach within Science and Technology Studies (STS) much in common with my own approach.⁶⁹ Two critical examples of successful projects in this vein include Karin Knorr-Cetina’s (1999) study of how scientists in distinct national networks make knowledge and Leila Kavar’s (2015) more recent and more closely comparable study of “legal activism” of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and France. Both of these scholars have executed long-term, comparative, fieldwork-based research projects examining questions about the relationship between networks of experts and the societies within which they operate. Like my study in this dissertation Kavar traces legal phenomena as they developed over a timescale of decades. Kavar addresses how distinct practices of immigrant rights legal activism in France and the United States, have been productive of subjectivities and social relations as well as (and in excess of) their contributions to rules or remedies that are the direct outcome of court cases.

⁶⁹ See Hankins (2014) for a description of how Latour’s approach to materiality has been mobilized in semiotic anthropology and Manning (2012) for an approach to materiality more firmly rooted in the anthropological tradition as opposed to within STS or Latours Actor Network Theory (ANT). Incidentally, Hankins’s book *Working Skin* is the only ethnography of multicultural recognition to address two supposedly commensurable cases, but he structures this quite differently, through actual encounters and relationships between labor-related minorities in two countries, one of which is the main setting for his research and the other of which is related by virtue of its connection to the main case.

In formulating my research design, Kavar's (2015, 16) description of the fortuitous advantages of alternating between national research sites, rather than conducting the full research at one site before moving on to the next, informed my decision to conduct two periods of fieldwork each in Norway and the United States, after preliminary research in both places. Recursive travel between the two contexts proved to be productive for me in much the way that Kavar describes, denaturalizing concepts and categories that are taken for granted within each of the two societal contexts. My approach to collecting the empirical materials for the dissertation also draws on Kavar's framing of the advantages of comparative work. As Kavar points out, in comparative work specifically, where "discovering surprising differences and unexpected similarities" is a core intention, "a multidimensional approach combining interviews and archival sources allows the research to more insightfully unpack meaning-making processes than reliance on a single method alone" (Kavar 2015, 18–19). My own research builds on her general insight about the advantages of multiple data types for comparative work, while operating within semiotic anthropology and using the concept of semiotic encounters, the use of a multiplicity of sources also follows logically from the theoretical frame.

Within anthropology, I found the most useful articulation of the value of comparison for semiotic anthropology in the recent work of Gal and Irvine (2019). Gal and Irvine (2019, 23) describe comparison as useful when it is a form of "situated relationality," a turn of phrase that also highlights the importance of positionality and relation in these semiotic approaches that makes them compatible with core commitments in Indigenous studies, even as the two scholarly traditions are not often discussed in light of one another. Drawing on the work of earlier scholars in the Marxian tradition, they

point to “how situated comparisons of cultural materials can create and reproduce politically powerful differentials,” illuminating the working of domination through hierarchies of value that exist in various social settings, though they differ in their content and their workings (Gal and Irvine 2019, 17).

Methods

Gathering the Empirical Materials

Because semiotic encounters extend beyond embodied interactions, so do the empirical materials I draw on in this dissertation.⁷⁰ I do not focus only on participant observation and interviews or historical or media research as a single “data type” of focus in the same way that some social scientists do. This is precisely because of the semiotic theoretical orientation of this project. Mine is an anthropological project that involves ethnographic empirical materials but does not limit itself to materials that derive from embodied encounters during fieldwork. The empirical materials I draw on in this dissertation range from my participant observation fieldnotes to semi-structured interviews I conducted to media accounts I encountered (both contemporary and historical) to the text of laws and regulations to the range of accounts about those laws and regulations and the processes they entail. Both enactments of Indigeneity and discourse *about* Indigenous identities are critical to central my attempt to identify the ways in which legal models of Indigeneity are cited, invoked, opposed, or undermined in

⁷⁰ I use of the term “empirical materials” (drawn from Denzin and Lincoln [2005]) rather than “data” because these materials are the result of my own positionality and my encounter with the field at particular moment that cannot be, and is not intended to be, replicated.

the broader negotiation of the position of Indigenous peoples and their distinctiveness decades after the introduction of rules of recognition.

Taken in sum, my methods for gathering the empirical materials for this dissertation take seriously the ways that contemporary practice and discourse are related to historical chains of semiosis and the ways such histories are also open to change in the present.⁷¹ I address the instances that comprise this fieldwork—interviews, events, media accounts, and more—as pragmatic semiotic encounters, analyzable for how they work and which categories they invoke and how. Because I am interested in how the content of these encounters draws on shared notions that are themselves the product or precipitate of prior encounters, I pay attention to

reflexive social processes—processes of value production, maintenance and transformation—through which a scheme of cultural values has a social life, as it were, a processual and dynamic existence that depends on the activities of social persons linked to each other through discursive interactions and institutions. (Agha 2007, 190)

Following Agha (2007, 190, emphasis mine), I take the stance that

cultural value is not a static property of things or people but a precipitate of sociohistorically locatable practices, including discursive practices, which imbue cultural forms with recognizable indexical sign-values and bring these values into circulation along identifiable trajectories in social space.

I access reflexive reanalysis through interviews, media accounts, and moments in my participant observation in which this reanalysis occurs in the flow of embodied social life.

In conducting formal interviews, I follow the principles of relational interviewing, as

⁷¹ Therefore, I pay attention to “reflexive social processes—processes of value production, maintenance and transformation—through which a scheme of cultural values has a social life, as it were, a processual and dynamic existence that depends on the activities of social persons linked to each other through discursive interactions and institutions” (Agha 2007, 190). Following Agha, I take the stance that “*cultural value is not a static property of things or people but a precipitate of sociohistorically locatable practices*, including discursive practices, which imbue cultural forms with recognizable indexical sign-values and bring these values into circulation along identifiable trajectories in social space” (Agha 2007, 190, emphasis mine).

outlined by Fujii (2018), while also taking into account the limitations of interviewing as a method when not accompanied by other ways of familiarizing oneself with the possible questions that can be asked (Briggs 1984). Where I analyze how notions of Indigeneity are produced in particular ways through enactment, rather than through explicit metasemiotic discourse, I draw on ethnographic fieldnotes especially, but also on mediated communications in which perceivable things that are considered signs of identity in the broader discourse appear, as in the course of semiotic encounters.

“Data Analysis”: Reanalysis, Relationships, and Routes of Recognition

As my articulation of the epistemology and methodology I employ in this dissertation suggests, I do not treat the empirical materials I use in this dissertation as “data.” Though I draw on empirical materials in the course of this dissertation, they are not alienable from the conditions under which I encountered them and the positionality I cultivated in order to understand them the way I do. “Data,” as the term is used in contemporary research, increasingly implies connotations that are inappropriate to the project I pursue here.

Increasingly, “data” is information collected by researchers that should be—and in some cases is *required* to be—made available for reinterpretation by other academics. I concur with de Koning et al. (2019), who write against the consideration of ethnographic materials as “data” in this sense. The research materials of ethnographers represent the result of relationships that an individual has cultivated. Oftentimes the information would not provide illuminating insights for an analyst who lacks the same contextual knowledge and who had not cultivated the same split positionality (Haraway 1991). Though I present

only some components of the fieldwork as research “findings” in this dissertation, the broader experience of the fieldwork as a whole was crucial to my fluency in the ontologies and ideologies that guide determinations of identity in both of the distinct societal contexts I bring together here. I needed to spend a great deal of time in order to understand the role of sociohistoric models within the particular contexts where I conducted participant observation. This acquisition of the knowledge of the relevant models (of identity and otherwise) was a substantial element of the fieldwork I conducted and, as is a common reality among ethnographers, exceeds the elements I present here. Anthropologists maintain a working knowledge of their research participants and their lifeworlds, much of which they rightly “refuse” to transform into alienated research data based on the inappropriateness of such an act; it would cross a limit of what the researcher can do and still be able to return (Simpson 2007, 78).⁷²

Instead of talking about “data,” I call the fieldnotes, interview transcripts, photographs, recordings, and so on that I draw on to articulate a vision of the two fieldwork contexts in Norway and the United States “empirical materials.”⁷³ I collected these in a variety of formats, both digital/digitized and on paper. I input much of this into a single project file in the computer-assisted data analysis software MAXQDA, both

⁷² Though these limits are heightened for Simpson as an ethnographer in her own home community, her sentiment about limits and what can be done and still allow the possibility for return is acute in fieldwork like my own, if in a different way. As an outsider researcher, I was reliant upon those who helped facilitate my access to the Indigenous communities to which they belonged. By designing my fieldwork with recursive movement between the two research sites, I committed myself to the need to return and the need to handle my relationships and my position in those settings in a way that would permit me to come back. The fact that I came back again and again when I said I would went a long way in building legitimacy, particularly in the Sami context with its history of over-research and unaccountable actions by outsider researchers.

⁷³ In so doing, I adapt wording from Agha (2007, 7), who distinguishes between “empirical cases” and theoretical points, and Rosa (2019) who distinguishes between empirical accounts and the constructed concepts that structure those accounts. As noted above, my use of the term “empirical materials” is drawn from Denzin and Lincoln (2005).

during and after stints of fieldwork.⁷⁴ I used the capacities of the software for coding, linking, and memoing to do my own reflexive reanalysis of the semiotic encounters I recorded as best I could in a variety of representational forms, usually through written fieldnotes, often supplemented with digital photographs and sometimes with video or audio recordings, especially to capture elements of place that I could describe only to an extent (from billboards to birdsong to the plants emerging green and fresh as the snow melted in Tromsø's June arctic springtime). For other sorts of empirical materials, archival and legal documents, for instance, it was easier to create renderings of them that can truly be referred to as copies, and these, too, I integrated into the same project files.

I analyzed the growing project file in MAXQDA from the point of view of the present of my fieldwork and again at other points as I proceeded through the recursive changes-of-place that constituted this fieldwork on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Throughout the fieldwork and the period of analysis and writing that followed it from 2019–2021, I used the built-in memo function in MAXQDA and old-fashioned paper notebooks to record insights and ideas that emerged about and from one of the two research contexts or across them. I also assigned codes to segments of textual, audio, and visual sources. I used these not to define “the meaning” of one instance (in the sense that Tuck and Yang [2014b] critique), but to track how some instances connect to a variety of others across time, space, and medium of the empirical materials, in line with the analytical strategies described in Gal and Irvine (2019, 21–23; 167–172). In that way, I traced relationships between people, places, and ideas, identifying points in broader discourse and the variety of other encounters involved in related semiotic chains.

⁷⁴ I began the project working with preliminary data in MAXQDA 2018 but conducted the majority of the analysis in a different project file in the next version of the software MAXQDA 2020.

Writing on Recognition

So much of the process of completing the research involved writing—writing fieldnotes and exploratory memos to track insights along the way. In the end, many of the sources I draw on in the dissertation are written ones, both scholarly writings and historical sources, with some explicitly intended to capture a moment for the future (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976, 4). In writing this dissertation, I have aimed to balance the analytical mission of the comparative frame and the theoretical foundations I draw on, maintaining respect for the stories that animate it, stories that are other peoples’ and have come into intersection with my own through this work. In my thinking about how to approach writing, I draw on Indigenous scholar’s writing on the importance of stories and storying practices; Atalay’s (2020) discussion of stories as seeds and Brooks’ (2018) work on *ôjmowôgan* (the Abenaki word for “the cyclical activity of recalling and relaying that with which we are collectively engaged” [Brooks 2018, 4]) and spatialized practices of writing (Brooks 2008). These ideas have informed the way I approached decisions about what to include in this dissertation, including a focus on how past connects to present and helps us to imagine futures that will follow.

CHAPTER 3

CONGRUENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF RECOGNITION:

NIPMUC CONCEPTIONS OF RECOGNITION AND THE NATIONAL SCALE

In this dissertation research, I understand “recognition” in specific ways. I focus on the relationship between social recognizability—the recognition or non-recognition of identities based on sign relations in social life—and political recognition—the assignation of a particular status by the state, a form of acknowledgment in the sense described in Chapter 1. However, I also recognize that the term “recognition” can mean, and has meant, different things to different people at various points in time. Given the range of meanings denoted by the English word “recognition” and the salience of the term historically for Indigenous people in the United States especially (Quinn 1990), I could not assume in conducting this dissertation research that my understanding of recognition would exactly match how Nipmuc interlocutors, in particular, thought about recognition. It was necessary to begin with questions about what recognition meant locally within the Nipmuc context.

The key method I relied on in my research in New England was in-depth relational interviews (Fujii 2018) with individuals who had been personally involved in or affected by the long Nipmuc pursuit of federal recognition, also called federal acknowledgment.⁷⁵ Those conversations allowed me to elicit reflections on Nipmucs’

⁷⁵ Though I could not discern a pattern in individuals’ use of “federal recognition” versus “federal acknowledgment” in the interviews I conducted—people seemed to use them interchangeably—it does seem that early-on in the history of national-scale organizing among non-federally recognized tribes, the word recognition is more common (based on my analysis of documentation from and about the American

experiences of the recognition process, contributing to answering my research questions, about Indigenous experiences of political recognition, material I focus on primarily in Chapter 5. The interviews, however, also provided me the opportunity to ask both Nipmuc interviewees and non-Native recognition researchers how they understood recognition as a concept: what did this word mean to them and how did they understand tribes' motivations for pursuing recognition? In this chapter, I focus on those particular results from the interviews.

In my analysis of the interviews, diverse interviewees showed a surprising degree of consensus when describing recognition, even across the diversity of their stances on the federal recognition work and the ways in which they were involved in it. In this chapter, I present those results and draw connections between the two-part understanding of recognition that is evident in the interviews and broader national-scale discourse on federal acknowledgment that has arisen since the 1990s. Though they used different precise terms to describe recognition, several Nipmuc interviewees talked about recognition in terms of the same two elements: recognition of identity and recognition of sovereignty, which they saw as linked to one another in the federal acknowledgment process. These same two elements featured prominently in how recognition federal acknowledgment researcher professionals talked about acknowledgment, and both elements appear in expert discourse on recognition at the national level during the 1990s and 2000s.

Indian Chicago Conference of 1961 and the American Indian Policy Review Commission's (AIPRC) Task Force Ten Report from 1976). The term "federal acknowledgment" seems to be one that came from state actors rather than from Indigenous people themselves; it appears prominently in the AIPRC final report from 1977 and is the key term in the 1978 regulation introducing the earliest form of today's acknowledgment regulation, along with the Branch of Acknowledgment Research (BAR), later called the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA).

However, this two-part understanding of recognition was not the only way that Nipmuc interviewees talked about recognition. Several interviewees also raised another distinct orientation to recognition, noting that recognition was important because it mediated access to programs and services, rather than for its mediation of tribal sovereignty. When interviewees described this alternative understanding of recognition, they did so in the context of the earlier phases of the Nipmuc work on recognition, before the beginning of the most intensive work on a petition for federal acknowledgment during the 1990s. This finding of another, earlier, understanding of and orientation toward recognition—one still remembered by at least some Nipmucs today—reveals that the meaning of recognition appears to have changed over time, as one outcome (or product, in Agha’s [2007] sense) of experience with the federal acknowledgment process or the evolution of that process over decades.⁷⁶

The first of these two conceptions—the idea that recognition is related to sovereignty and identity—appears prominently in national-scale discourse about the recognition of Native American tribes by the time anthropologists and historians began in earnest to write about federal acknowledgment in the 1990s and early 2000s.⁷⁷ The notion

⁷⁶ I bracket the question of what exactly caused this transformation and why this earlier meaning of recognition is rarely elaborated in the anthropological and scholarly literatures on federal acknowledgment until the next chapter.

⁷⁷ By the late 1980s, as increasing numbers of tribes petitioned for acknowledgment through the BIA’s Branch of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR), federal acknowledgment started to receive more public press and scholarly attention than it had since before the creation of federal acknowledgment regulations in 1978 (C.F.R. 25 § 83). In part, this increased attention was due to the rise of Indian gaming as a potentially lucrative development opportunity only available to federally recognized tribes (Cramer 2005a, 2005b). Many of the early authors of scholarly works on non-recognized tribes were already working with tribes on their recognition petitions through the federal acknowledgment process, including anthropologists Campisi (Hauptman and Campisi 1988; Campisi 1991; Campisi and Starna 1999), Greenbaum (1991), Grabowski (1995a); historians Hauptman (Hauptman and Campisi 1988) and Starna (Campisi and Starna 1995), as well as lawyer Quinn (1990). Others were written by members of non-federally recognized tribes (Wilkins 1993; McCulloch and Wilkins 1995). Authors writing from that vantage point were steeped in the contemporary activism of non-federally recognized tribes with whom they worked closely in their bids for acknowledgment through the federal administrative process, primarily, but also with Congress and the

that recognition was crucial to tribes because of its role in mediating access to programs and services is much less prominent in scholarly and expert accounts. If the contemporary understanding of recognition among my Nipmuc interlocutors reflected national-scale discourse, did this earlier focus on programs and services do the same? In this chapter, rather than simply reporting on and characterizing the results of the interviews, I endeavor to put Nipmuc conceptions of recognition into context through examination of the traces of discourse on recognition in the pre-1978 era and during and after the rise in attention to administrative acknowledgment during the late 1980s and into the 1990s.

Through the combined use of interviews and document-based historical research, I discovered that the meaning of recognition in the Nipmuc context cannot be fully understood without attention to developments at the national scale, in the organizing and advocacy that Klopotek (2011, 23) has called the “national recognition movement” among non-federally recognized Native American tribes. A close relationship between the Nipmuc recognition effort and national-scale developments is evident in the very conceptualizations of recognition among Nipmuc people today and in their understanding of how recognition was understood in their own community during the earlier phases of

courts. With few exceptions, accounts of federal recognition by scholars who were *not* personally involved in the business of acknowledgment as insiders did not begin to emerge until later on. Historian Mark Edwin Miller wrote the first book length manuscript on federal recognition in 2004, including a history of the contemporary process and stories of several individual tribes’ experiences with it. Miller’s (2004) historical research included interviews with Bureau of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR)/Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) employees and key figures in the drafting of the acknowledgment regulations, as well as interviews with tribal members. Cramer (2005a, 2005b) wrote on what the impact of the IGRA and the advent of Indian high stakes gambling operations had on public attitudes toward Indians and recognition. Cramer’s work was part of an upswing in scholarship on the topic of Indian gaming, not necessarily recognition, that would carry on for years both before and after Cramer’s (2005a, 2005b) main contributions (Mullis and Kamper 2000; Sioux 2000; Spilde 2004; Cattelino 2008, 2011, 2018; Cortassel and Witmer 2008; among others). Further accounts of particular groups’ recognition struggles and analyses of U.S. federal acknowledgment itself have continued to appear in more recent years (Biolsi 2005; Brown-Perez 2013; Den Ouden and O’Brien 2013; Den Ouden 2013; Field et al. 2013; Gonzales and Evans 2013; Gould 2013; Hiraldo 2020; Kauanui 2013; Lowery 2010, 2013; Riley 2016; Robinson 2013; Torres 2013; Wilkins and Lowery 2001; Wilkins and Stark 2010, 2018).

recognition work the stretch back to the 1960s. Nipmuc understandings of recognition mirror the evolution of the term evident in national-scale discourses in which Nipmuc people participated from the early years of their involvement with the push for recognition, in the early 1960s, through the more recent effort to petition for federal acknowledgment after 1978, in which my interviewees were personally involved.

The empirical materials presented in this chapter point me toward understanding recognition as a cultural model, a concept with a large social domain (Agha 2007, 33, 64–65). As we will see in this chapter, such models are still open to transformation over time. The understandings of recognition that predominated among Native Americans during the early 1960s were notably distinct from the concept of recognition Nipmucs and recognition professionals articulate today. I reserve the question of how such a transformation took place for Chapter 4.

Here, in Chapter 3, I demonstrate the connection between Nipmuc understandings of “recognition” and the national scale. The congruence between Nipmuc and national concepts speaks to the importance of the national field in which individual tribes’ experiences of recognition in the United States played out. As much as the experience—and the outcomes—of pursuing federal acknowledgment differed among different groups, these struggles share a common vocabulary backed by widely held understandings of key concepts. Focusing on a single group’s experience without putting it in the context of national scale developments risks misrepresenting the experience of advocating for recognition during the 1960s and 1970s, and, eventually, seeking recognition through the federal acknowledgment process after 1978.

Outline of the Chapter

In this chapter, I proceed through four main sections. First, I present an analysis of the consensus meaning of recognition mobilized by all but one of my Nipmuc interviewees in Fall 2018. I draw on interviewees' exact language to show how they understood recognition very similarly, in terms of identity and in terms of sovereignty, even as they articulated different stances about the recognition project itself and experienced the recognition work through different lenses based on their individual identities (in terms of gender, generation, and so on).

In a second section, I demonstrate that Nipmucs' two-part understanding of recognition is also shared by differently positioned actors who are clearly linked to the national scale. I draw on my original interviews with recognition research professionals and testimony submitted to Congressional hearings on the federal acknowledgment process to show that experts involved on the national scale express an understanding of recognition that is congruent to that expressed by my Nipmuc interviewees. All describe recognition as related to identity and sovereignty.

However, as I detail in a third section of this chapter, the two-part notion of recognition related to identity and sovereignty was not the only understanding of recognition that Nipmuc interviewees described to me in fall of 2018. Three of the interviewees, arguably those with the most in-depth knowledge of the earliest period of Nipmucs' engagements with the recognition concept, spoke of a distinct meaning for recognition, one that predated the two-part understanding that predominates today. These interviewees talked about recognition as mediating access to programs and services, rather than as a gateway to the recognition of sovereign rights and legitimate Indigenous

identity. Their descriptions linked this notion of recognition to the earliest Nipmuc advocacy around recognition, led by Zara CiscoeBrough in the 1960s and 1970s, before there was a clear administrative federal acknowledgment process.

In the fourth section of this chapter, I examine how this earlier meaning of recognition, like today's two-part understanding, also has strong links to the national scale. I examine contemporary accounts the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC) in 1961, a national meeting of Native American leaders that scholars have since identified as the origin-point for the national recognition movement (Hauptman and Campisi 1988; Klopotek 2011; Den Ouden and O'Brien 2013). A close reading of these historical documents clearly demonstrates that in the 1961 national organizing context recognition was considered important primarily for its role in mediating access to federal programs and services. Each of these terms occurs frequently in ways that are similar to the use of the terms among my Nipmuc interviewees in interviews conducted in 2018.

Nipmucs' Understandings of Recognition Today

When conducting interviews with Nipmuc interviewees and recognition researchers alike, the immediate referent for "recognition" was always the federal acknowledgment process, but it became clear across the course of the interviews that individuals understood this desire for federal acknowledgment to be related to dynamics of social recognizability, as I call them in this dissertation. At the same time, interviewees also understood acknowledgment to be related to tribal sovereignty. It became clear that they all understood "recognition" to represent others' acknowledgment of their Nipmuc identities and to convey the federal government's acknowledgment of the tribe as a

sovereign nation. Though the words individual interviewees used differed, the concept they described—the dual-nature of recognition they described—paralleled each other, despite differences in age, gender, involvement in or distance from the recognition work itself, and differences in their views on federal acknowledgment. Here, I include the descriptions of recognition from two quite different interviewees to demonstrate this alignment characterized the overall set of interviews, with the exception of the eldest interviewee I with whom spoke, long time tribal council member Donald Gould. I will turn to Gould’s contributions and what they can tell us about changes in the predominant understanding of recognition among Nipmucs later in this chapter.

Sovereignty; Emotional Recognition

The interviewee who spoke most at length about recognition and its dual nature was Dr. Thomas Doughton. Doughton, a member of the Nipmuc community who describes himself as “of Nipmuc heritage” is a lecturer in history at Holy Cross College in Worcester by profession. Doughton is notable for his role with the Nipmuc Tribal Acknowledgment Project (NTAP), funded by the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) in the 1980s and for his later involvement in the process of petitioning for acknowledgment through the federal acknowledgment office at the BIA. I met with Doughton at Holy Cross College on a sunny October afternoon in 2018. With the main address for the college typed into the GPS on my phone, I set out eastbound toward Worcester, taking in the sweeping view of the city afforded from the highway as I approached. The historic train station shone white in the fall sunshine, towering over the rest of the downtown. The college sits on a hill to the south of the city, surrounded by

rows of vinyl sided single- and multi-family houses in pale pastel blues, greens, and grays lining the neighboring streets. The campus is divided from the town by a high fence topped with wrought iron, painted a shiny black.⁷⁸

The history of the Worcester Doughton knows defies a simplistic black and white telling, or even a Black, white, and Red one (see interview with Doughton in Thompson 2012; Bullard et al. 2017). Doughton grew up in Worcester and has taught the history of Worcester as well as the history of the Holocaust in Europe at Holy Cross for many years. This personal and scholarly background came through in his own analysis of how recognition is understood by differently positioned people, not just within the Nipmuc community, but within the wider circle of experts, investors, and BIA staff involved in the business of tribal acknowledgment. He emphasized differences in people's understandings of and commitments to recognition as a part of the reason the tribe has pursued acknowledgment through the Bureau of Indian Affairs administrative process, despite what he saw as some steep challenges for the group in meeting the federal standards required of Indian tribes in order to be acknowledged as sovereign nations. Doughton judged the challenges that Nipmuc Nation faced in meeting the criteria of the federal acknowledgment regulation to be so dire that he described the effort as "doomed from the start" (Doughton 2018, interview with the author). Doughton's description of

⁷⁸ Worcester's history is remarkable for its history of abolitionist and women's rights activism as a part of the rise of the middle class in the city during the mid-19th through mid-20th centuries (Davidson 2016; Rodrique 2002). Worcester has long been a city that received large number of immigrants, initially from Europe, but also, notably, African Americans after the Civil War (see Bullard et al. 2017; Thompson 2012). Racist backlash in the city during the early 20th century targeted Jewish and Catholic immigrants (Mass Historical, n.d.). Holy Cross is a Catholic institution founded during Nativist opposition to increased Catholic immigration in New England during the industrial period of the late 19th century (see Kuzniewski 1999). The son of a slave was among early graduates of Holy Cross College (Holy Cross, n.d.); unlike many other places in the country, the public schools in Worcester were never racially segregated (Thompson 2012). Today, the city, which has been in economic decline since 1970, receives substantial numbers of immigrants and refugees from South America, Africa, and the Middle East (Davidson 2016).

this situation made clear that he understood federal recognition on one level, in its formal dimensions as established in federal law, to be about recognition as a sovereign nation:

[W]hen we talk about recognition, what do we mean? I mean, if we mean recognition within the very narrow confines of the BIA statutes, then we're talking about being recognized as a sovereign nation. . . And obviously for a variety of reasons, those statutes would discriminate against many east coast communities. . . [Y]ou can be a community and share a tribal identity, but that does not make you a sovereign nation within federal statutes. (Doughton 2018, interview with the author)

However, as Doughton described why Nipmuc Nation might petition for recognition, even against these odds, he relied on a second meaning of recognition, or a second type of recognition, as a part of the answer to my question, which he elaborated over the course of our two-hour conversation. While he traced the emphasis on acknowledgment of sovereignty to the “federal statutes,” he ascribed this second meaning of recognition, related to identity, to many of his fellow Nipmucs:

Some people [did see]—and still *to this day*—see recognition as legitimizing heritage, that it becomes an emotional point, as it were, something that's really emotive, that I want you to say I am a Nipmuc, because that will make me feel better if you do that. (Doughton 2018, interview with the author)

Doughton had clearly conceptualized that there were two kinds of recognition that people were seeking when they undertook the pursuit of federal recognition: official recognition, “recognition as a sovereign nation,” and “emotional” recognition, seeking legitimization of their heritage. For Doughton, Nipmucs' desire to seek a personal “emotional” form of affirmation through the federal acknowledgment process set them up for disappointment because the official criteria do not align with Nipmuc history and Nipmuc identity. In his view, seeking this kind of recognition from outsiders becomes a trap:

I'm not looking at other people expecting them to see me a way I want to be seen, and I think that's a problem with recognition for many people, especially if they're so invested that their identity in the sense of self-worth, or even just

appreciation of—or recognition of the complexity of who they are is to be determined by someone else looking back at them in a certain way. So, there are folks in our community who are in that position, who do highly value an outsider’s stare, as it were. (Doughton 2018, interview with the author)

The desire for this recognition of identity, he suggested, had led Nipmucs to petition for recognition through the federal acknowledgment process, even where, in his view, there were always serious challenges to making Nipmuc history and community fit into the terms required by the federal acknowledgment process. Some Nipmucs had overlooked these because of their “emotional” drive to be acknowledged as Nipmucs by outsiders. Doughton’s observation that this kind of recognition would not materialize without meeting the stipulations for acknowledgment as a sovereign nation was astute. The two kinds of recognition were linked, but where they were linked perhaps more loosely in peoples’ minds, they were linked quite unyieldingly in the actual criteria and processes of the administrative path to acknowledgment.

Self-Government; Legitimacy as Native People

Other Nipmuc interviewees referred to both the identity-related and sovereignty-related kinds of recognition that Doughton outlined, even if they described them in different words. To demonstrate the pattern, and the way it held across interviewees that were among the most different from one another in terms of generation, age, and involvement in the federal acknowledgment work, I turn here to Kristen Wyman’s comments on the reasons that Nipmucs pursued acknowledgment through the administrative pathway at the BIA. Wyman is an active leader in a variety of Indigenous causes and organizations in the state, including for the Nipmuc group her family is a part of, the Natick Nipmucs, who trace their families back to the historical Praying Town of

Natick in the eastern part of the Nipmuc country.⁷⁹ I met Wyman for an interview in fall 2018. I knew her from her work with a substance abuse prevention partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Native American community leaders from across the state, which I had joined as a summer intern in 2016.

A few weeks after the interview with Doughton, I drove out to eastern Massachusetts, nearly to the coast, to meet with Wyman at the public library of a wealthy and majority white suburb of Boston, not too far from the town where Wyman had been living with her two young daughters for a number of years. Wyman grew up near Natick in what is today a largely white suburban community. She was keenly aware that in many settings she was taken for white based on her appearance, an awareness made all the sharper, as she pointed out, because members of her family are most often perceived as Black. As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, Wyman was easily able to draw examples of how race informed her recognizability as Nipmuc to a variety of acquaintances she encountered in her leadership of land-based education and agroecology efforts in the region.

Early on in the interview, when asked about the Nipmuc Nation federal acknowledgment project, Wyman confirmed what I suspected: she had not been involved directly in the recognition work. She is part of a younger generation compared to many of those I spoke with who had personal memories of the recognition work; she had been in high school and college during the peak of the recognition petition work in the 1990s and

⁷⁹ See O'Brien's (2003) *Dispossession by Degrees* about the history of Natick in the 17th and 18th centuries. The town of Natick, Massachusetts has, more recently, been notable for its role in the statewide—and indeed regional and national—controversy over “Indian” mascots in schools (e.g., WBUR 2007, Rosen 2013, and substantial coverage in the *MetroWest Daily News* from about 2006 onward through the present). The Natick high school team's imagery and press coverage of their games continues to dominate the search results for the term “Nipmuc” more than fifteen years after the mascot was changed.

early 2000s, leading up to the positive preliminary determination in 2001 and the negative final determination in 2004. Members of her family had been involved at one point, but her family was among those eventually disenrolled as the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council tried to respond to the advice of experts on how to satisfy the federal acknowledgment criteria (a longer discussion of that history follows in Chapter 5).

Wyman told me that she had a hard time understanding exactly why an older generation had pursued federal recognition, but that she got the impression it was about two things. On the one hand, she thought it was “about status” and on the other hand, she’d heard that some people wanted to build a casino, “so economic reasons.” Recognition for her, as for Doughton, had a dual meaning: “we’re being recognized as legitimate Native people in our homeland, and have rights to self-government” (Wyman 2018, interview with author). Meanwhile, her mention of “economic reasons” and “rights to self-government” closely parallel Doughton’s discussion of sovereignty and the rights that come through federally recognized status, in particular, perhaps through the ability to have land held in trust and to build tribal enterprises, which some but not all Nipmucs imagined should include a gaming operation. These two notions of recognition—as an acknowledgment of identity but also of status—recurred consistently across the interviews, providing a common baseline understanding among the interviewees about what the recognition process was about, even among interviewees with very different relationships to the recognition work.

The Same Two Meanings at the National Scale

The two-part sense of recognition was not a feature only of the Nipmuc interviewees' reflections on recognition. This notion of recognition also informed discourse from experts in recognition research, both those included in my interview set, who had worked on the Nipmuc Nation petition as well as many other tribes' recognition efforts, and other voices captured through Congressional hearings on the federal acknowledgment process in the 1990s and 2000s.⁸⁰ To illustrate the close parallel, I include here the example of how Dr. Christine Grabowski talked about the entailments of federal acknowledgment at our interview in her Chelsea office in New York City in the fall of 2018 and I demonstrate the congruence of her statements to that of the testimony of legal expert James Keedy, a veteran of acknowledgment work on behalf of tribes from Michigan. Despite their differences in career trajectory and regional focus, these two experts talked about recognition in terms of identity and sovereignty, just as the majority of my Nipmuc interviewees had.

Land and Resources; Personal Identity and Respect

I knew Grabowski's name because Dr. D. Rae Gould, one of the Nipmuc tribal members I worked closely with at the beginning of this project, remembered her so well. Gould remembered Grabowski as someone who had been hired early in the acknowledgment work of the 1990s, not long after investors had gotten involved, and told it like it was, even when it wasn't what the tribal council wanted to hear. Grabowski's tenure with Nipmuc Nation was short. She was dismissed from the project,

⁸⁰ *Hearing Before the Committee on Indian Affairs United States Senate on S. 479*. 104th Congress, 1st sess., Washington, DC; *Hearing on H.R. 2837 Before the H. Comm. on Natural Res.*, 110th Congress.

one in a series of outside researchers hired and then let go as tribal leadership and investors tried to find someone who would offer assurances that the recognition case would succeed. Grabowski had worked extensively with the Aquinnah Wampanoag in the 1980s and after her short stint with Nipmuc Nation in the 1990s, went on to work with a series of different tribes on their federal acknowledgment petitions.

In 2018, Grabowski ran her own research firm in New York City, no longer working in acknowledgment but still doing research for tribes.⁸¹ On her firm's website, I found a photo of her wearing a belted sweater with gray hair to her shoulders and dainty black glasses perched on her nose. She posed with one heel kicked up against a brick wall, the city's gum-splotched sidewalk supporting her other foot. I got in touch with her via her website's contact page and she called me back to set up a time for an interview.

A few weeks later, I arrived at her office in Chelsea, having dashed across town from my midtown visa appointment for my upcoming trip to Norway. The doorman let me into the elevator, and I made my way through the maze of doors to Grabowski's office. The little room was piled high with boxes of paperwork and records. We squeezed past to a stiff little couch by the window. We sat side by side and Christine turned her attention to past decades, the brief period when she was brought on to assist with Nipmuc recognition research, the many other cases she took during the early years of recognition research in the 1980s, and the period when federal acknowledgment was an issue of

⁸¹ Early on in our conversation in New York City in fall 2018, she warned me "I don't have a lot of good to say about the federal acknowledgment process. I think it's, um, flawed, politically driven, um, certainly racist." She has publicly testified to the same in US Congressional Hearings (Federal Recognition Administrative Procedures Act: hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, first session, on S. 479 to provide for administrative procedures to extend federal recognition to certain Indian groups, July 13, 1995, Washington, DC).

much greater public interest. My audio recorder's red light seemed to grow brighter in the dimly lit room as the day faded from afternoon to evening.

Grabowski raised the topic of tribes' motivations for pursuing recognition without me asking about it directly. For her, tribes' motivations were linked to her own motivations for taking on recognition work. Even though public discourse on tribes, casinos, and federal acknowledgment would have one believe these three things were inseparable, she wanted to make clear that tribes were pursuing the administrative federal acknowledgment process before the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988 (Public Law 100-497). Personally, Grabowski had started doing acknowledgment work in the 1980s, before gaming came into the picture. Gaming and all it entailed was not her motivation, nor was it the motivation of tribes at that time. She told me she had gotten involved because it was "something that I thought was worthwhile to the tribes."⁸² As she put it:

To me it seemed that every tribe that was seeking [recognition], it was a very important issue personally, right? And regardless of whether they won a land suit or resources or anything else, it was about their personal identity. And it was about having respect. And I understood that, because it oozed from every person. (Grabowski 2018, interview with author)

The problem for non-federally recognized tribes was a problem of legal status; however, beyond the resources or rights that status would provide, the lack of recognition also created a subjective problem. Grabowski described that problem simply: when you are Native American, but your tribe is not acknowledged, "You're not being recognized for who you are." These two types of recognition help to contextualize the hopes or

⁸² Grabowski's narrative mirrors the narrative on federal recognition in the mid-1980s as evident in Greenbaum (1985), which suggests federal recognition presented a good opportunity for anthropologists and other researchers to give back to tribes, a process wherein researchers' skills aligned with a project that was important to tribes themselves.

expectations about recognition that petitioning groups brought to the federal acknowledgment process, both within Indigenous communities and among the experts working with them in the acknowledgment process. Grabowski's understanding that recognition being simultaneously about access to "land and resources" and about "personal identity" and respect very closely parallels the idea that recognition is about both self-government or sovereign status and an emotional form of recognition related to the acknowledgment of a legitimate Native identity, as expressed by Doughton and Wyman.

Status; Validation

Grabowski is not the only professional who highlighted identity as an important element of what tribes hope to have recognized in the federal acknowledgment process, alongside their rights to land, resources, and political relationships. In his testimony before Congress in 2007, James Keedy, Executive Director of Michigan Indian Legal Services, who had worked with Michigan tribes on federal acknowledgment petitions for decades by the time of the 2007 hearing, provided an account of the economic challenges for non-federally recognized tribes seeking recognition:

The tenacity and strength of the American Indians who are members and leaders of Tribes that are not yet—and may never be—federally recognized is a constant source of amazement. . . There are few, if any, resources available for them to survive as tribal governments to allow them to maintain their Indian cultures, languages and traditions. . . These Tribes simply cannot sustain themselves in this economy and political climate without the *status* and services that come with recognition by the federal government. This loss would be enormous, not only for the Indian people themselves, but also for the entire nation. It is certainly not a loss that we should accept before making a strong effort to ensure that it does not occur. (Keedy 2007, 4–5, emphasis mine)

From there, Keedy goes on to speak to a second set of motivations that are related to the “emotional” dimension that Doughton, too, emphasized in his account, if from a somewhat less sympathetic angle. “It is difficult,” Keedy wrote to Congress, “to express the importance of federal recognition to tribal members. . . . To many tribal members, recognition represented both a validation and a turning point for the region’s Indian community” (Keedy 2007, 5). To support this characterization, he cites a quotation from a member of the Grand Traverse Band published in a Traverse City newspaper on the 20th anniversary of the band’s recognition by the federal acknowledgment office:

“That day, I think the sun was shining for everybody,” said Bonnie Inman, a tribal member who has worked for the band since its formal start. “[T]he day we got recognized, we were suddenly a people. I was suddenly a person. There was a feeling that there was no end to what we could do.” (Tribe Remembers Humble Beginning, Traverse City Record Eagle, May 21, 2000, cited in Keedy 2007, 5)

These sentiments demonstrate that the bestowal of recognition carries an emotional impact. When the process of applying for acknowledgment was not going well for petitioning tribes, Keedy’s testimony portrays this as an injustice in terms of the deprivation of recognition of identity *and* in terms of the rights that tribes should be able to access but, because of a lack of federally recognized status, could not. This two-part consensus understanding of recognition, shared by research professionals and tribal members alike, is part of a bigger national discourse.

Identity, Sovereignty, and Scholarly Discourse on Recognition

This discourse from recognition experts working with a variety of tribes in different regions of the country strongly suggests that this two-part notion of recognition is salient at a national scale. The two-part meaning of recognition and the idea that tribes

pursue acknowledgment in order to gain recognition in terms of both identity and political status is also echoed throughout much of the scholarly literature on recognition. This is true both in liberal theories about “politics of recognition,” as described in Chapter 1, and in scholarship on the federal acknowledgment process in particular (e.g., Campisi and Starna 1999). For example, in describing politics of recognition, Taylor ([1992] 1994, 25) identifies this type of claim with “nationalist” movements. The idea that recognition for Native Americans is about sovereign status, a relationship with the federal government, and “land and resources” tracks closely with the history of “federal recognition” as a status for Indian tribes in relationship to the United States (Quinn 1990).

The notion of recognition of identity, on the other hand, tracks more closely with activist discourse on recognition of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Combahee River Collective 1974), which is also echoed in political theory scholarship that first emerged in the 1990s (Young 1990; Taylor [1992] 1994; Fraser 2001a, 2001b; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Markell 2003; and others). The idea that not being recognized and respected for who you are creates a pressing problem, that this need for recognition might “ooze from every person” as Grabowski described, relates to Fanon’s (1952) work linking the recognition of human dignity to identity, especially racialized identity, and to the notion of misrecognition elaborated later by Taylor (1992). Doughton’s understanding that pursuing this kind of acknowledgment from authorities can become a trap certainly seems to recall Fanon’s anticolonial stance, a point of view that has recently experienced a renaissance in North America in the work of Coulthard (2007, 2014), Simpson (2014), and others.

Among the activist and state discourses that have been described as “politics of recognition,” federal recognition of Native American tribes is distinct for the close linkage between the two kinds of recognition my interlocutors described. Even in the Canadian case, which is relatively similar to the US case when taken in global context, Indigenous rights are less often talked about in terms of sovereignty. Nor is that term often used in the context of Sami Studies.⁸³ Yet, in the case of federal recognition of US Indian tribes, it becomes clear that this two-part meaning of recognition has circulated widely at the national scale. It has become a naturalized part of much of the discourse on recognition across distinct settings and venues and spanning several decades. However, my research reveals that today’s widespread understanding of recognition as linked to sovereignty was not always the predominant one, not among Nipmuc people nor nationally. To examine an alternative, earlier understanding of recognition, I first I turn to my interviews with Nipmuc interlocutors before once again returning to the question of congruency of Nipmuc concepts with those circulating at the national scale.

Earlier Nipmuc Motivations for Pursuing Recognition: Programs and Services

By 2018, at the close of Nipmuc Nation’s decades-long pursuit of federally recognized status, the individuals I spoke with expressed remarkably similar understandings of recognition, despite individuals’ diversity of relationships to the recognition work and their heterogeneity in terms of gender and generation. Across the group, all agreed that recognition had two meanings. On one level, they linked

⁸³ As Kuokannen (2011, 40) notes, Sami intellectual and political elites assiduously avoid this terminology, insisting that they are concerned with self-determination but *not* sovereignty; this pattern is familiar from my early conversations with Sami academics in 2016.

recognition to the federal acknowledgment process and the sovereign status and rights that such a relationship to the US federal government would convey. On a second level, they related recognition to identity, knowing that recognition could refer to outsiders' perception and acknowledgment of individuals' Nipmuc identity as authentic and legitimate. These two kinds of recognition were tied together in the Nipmuc pursuit of federal acknowledgment that my interviewees reflected on from their own personal involvement, beginning, for the eldest among them, in the 1980s, and for many of them during the 1990s in what one tribal leader referred to as the "third phase" of acknowledgment work (Holley 2018, interview with author).

However, even as the interviewees all understood recognition in this consensus way, as a two-part concept, a subset of my interviewees made remarks during the interviews that suggested that this *contemporary* consensus did not reflect the *initial* orientation to recognition among Nipmuc leadership in the 1960s and early 1970s. Their comments suggested the current two-part notion emerged somewhere along the way, over the course of the decades during which several generations of Nipmuc leadership figures pursued different forms of recognition. Nipmuc Nation did not receive their final determination from the Office of Federal Acknowledgment until 2004, and the group continued to appeal the decision until 2018. However, as I have noted in the Introduction to the dissertation, the roots of Nipmuc involvement in Native American organizing around the issue of non-recognition stretch back at least to 1960. At that time, Zara CiscoeBrough, who had grown up at Hassanamisco in Grafton, Massachusetts, took an active role in national-scale organizing around the needs of Native American communities, including non-federally recognized communities in New England. In this

way, the Nipmuc history of political action explicitly centered on “recognition” stretches back long before the creation of a federal acknowledgment regulation in 1978 and even before the increased attention to the existence of non-federally recognized tribes that characterized the 1970s.

Opposing Interpretations of History but Agreement on Programs and Services

Although nearly all my Nipmuc interviewees spoke of the motives for pursuing recognition in terms of identity and sovereignty, interviewees with the most knowledge of the history of the federal acknowledgment effort also described the initial interest in recognition as related to programs and services that were accessible only to recognized tribes. Two of these interviewees were very involved in historical work, both professionally and through their involvement in the Nipmuc community. Their interest in Nipmuc history exceeded their work on federal recognition and recognition-related research, even as each contributed his or her expertise to the cause of federal recognition at various points in the decades-long petitioning process. The first of these was Dr. Thomas Doughton, whose description of the relationship between recognition and identity and recognition and status as a sovereign nation I have already discussed. As one of the eldest Nipmucs I was able to interview at length, Doughton also brought a wealth of his own personal memories of earlier leadership figures, such as Ciscoe Brough, into the conversation.

The second interviewee who spoke about the earliest recognition efforts was Dr. D. Rae Gould. Gould is an archaeologist by training, who has long been involved in both recognition research and Nipmuc efforts toward historical preservation of their heritage.

She has substantial professional historical expertise and knowledge of the 20th century history of social and political activities among Nipmuc people at Hassanamisco, in Grafton, Massachusetts. She wrote her dissertation, completed at the University of Connecticut's Department of Anthropology, about the Hassanamisco homestead, utilizing archaeological evidence, historical research, and a cultural landscapes perspective that considers the way caretakers steward and conceptualize a place (Gould 2010). In her dissertation and later publications (e.g., Gould 2020), Gould centers on the Cisco family and considers the importance of CiscoeBrough's leadership for the future of Nipmuc places and Nipmuc people.

When I first them asked about recognition, both Doughton and Gould used the same two meanings of recognition as the full set of interviewees, remarking on the relationship between recognition and identity and recognition and sovereignty. However, as I spoke with Doughton and Gould about Nipmucs' motivations for pursuing recognition, each drew a distinction that was not present in the other interviews. Both suggested that the earliest efforts to pursue recognition, which trace back to the 1960s and 1970s, were motivated not primarily by the pursuit of recognition as a route to acknowledgment of identity and sovereignty, but instead by a drive to serve the community, especially by creating or facilitating access to "programs" (they both used this same word). Both expressed the understanding that creating programs and facilitating access to services and opportunities has been important to successive waves of Nipmucs who had tried to make a difference in their community, regardless of the conflicts that arose around the topics of federal acknowledgment and how best it should be pursued. And each expressed the idea that those who worked to create access to "programs" for

Nipmucs were doing something worthwhile, whether they undertook such work in the past or in the present.

Descriptions focused on programs and services were especially prominent in Doughton and Gould's discussions of the work of Zara CiscoeBrough, a Hassanamisco Nipmuc woman who, beginning in the 1950s, had taken on a leadership role in the Nipmuc community, and over the years became a conduit for state-level, regional, and even national engagement on behalf of Nipmuc people. Gould and Doughton disagreed on how particular facets of and figures in Nipmuc history should be understood, particularly as regards CiscoeBrough's role, influence, and legitimacy as a leader.⁸⁴ And yet, both described her efforts, and in Doughton's case, other efforts before the 1990s, as related explicitly to the pursuit of programs and services. Whatever their stance on CiscoeBrough, both Gould and Doughton agreed that trying to facilitate Nipmucs access to programs and services was an admirable purpose. In describing her positive contributions, both emphasized her focus on providing programs and services to the Nipmuc community, which they saw as a major goal of her work, including her work to pursue recognition from the state of Massachusetts and later from the federal government.

⁸⁴ Gould views Zara CiscoeBrough as an important historical leadership figure, a stance expressed in both my interview with her in 2018 and in her published writings (Gould 2010, 2020). Doughton, on the other hand, was critical of the way that CiscoeBrough took up a mantle of leadership (a stance that will be discussed further in Chapter 5 where I address views on leadership). Doughton saw some of CiscoeBrough's actions as having driven a wedge between Nipmucs in Grafton and "old timers" who did not see CiscoeBrough as the sort of leadership figure that she understood herself to be. From Gould's perspective, CiscoeBrough's activities were important for maintaining important historical places and knowledge for the future, setting up the possibility of petitioning for recognition, among other things; for Doughton, during CiscoeBrough's time, "there was a distance created" between those in Grafton and Nipmuc communities elsewhere who "had always been close to the people who lived at Grafton" (Doughton 2018, interview with the author).

Doughton did acknowledge that he thought some of CiscoeBrough's actions could have been promising; these centered primarily on her efforts to create relevant programs and institutions for Nipmucs, to make existing government services accessible to the Nipmuc community, and to push the state to establish new programs that would better serve Native Americans. "She was interested in providing services to people. At the end of her life she was working here in Worcester providing, you know, social service information to people" (Doughton 2018, interview with the author). Doughton's view, among several people who were involved in the origins of the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) in the 1970s, Zara CiscoeBrough was "the main instigator, as it were," and he understood the original intention of that group to be the creation of new programs to benefit Native Americans in Massachusetts.

Doughton approved of these aims. In fact, he described a variety of Nipmuc-led projects as important to the extent that they were able to create programs, including the endeavor with which he had been most closely involved, the Nipmuc Tribal Acknowledgment Project (NTAP) of the 1980s. Where he disapproved of particular projects or historical figures, it was for their failure to actually create helpful programs, especially if they had access to funds that could have enabled them to do so. Although throughout the interview he stated that he had long seen the Nipmuc Nation recognition efforts "doomed from the start," he was drawn back into them several times because he "wanted to see if under the cover or under the guise of federal recognition we could get some other things done." Once casino investors were backing the work, Doughton recalled to me, "I thought, well, maybe since, you know, big money is coming in, we can set up *programs* for people" (Doughton 2018, interview with the author, emphasis mine).

He listed off some of the ideas he'd had about what the money could have been used for, all of it centered on the idea of programs and community:

We could set up a housing program. We could set up outreach to elders. We could do something by insisting that some of this money will not go to high pressure lobbyists in Washington DC, that we will be able to use some of this money, um, for our community...

Ultimately, he was disappointed with the fact that much of the money was used to fund the acknowledgment research itself and to pay consultants and experts who could help the tribe to navigate the federal acknowledgment regulations. The results, if one was looking for meaningful programs like Doughton had been, were unsatisfying:

[I]t turns out that with both groups, uh, one acre of land was purchased. *Not one program was created.* Not one item of cultural patrimony was restored. There is not a single thing that we can point to other than maybe the restoration of the Cisco house, which is going forward.⁸⁵

Not all interviewees placed the weight of failure on the historical figures who led these projects, although all agreed that many of the plans from the past never came to fruition. For all their differences in how they saw Zara CiscoeBrough's activism and leadership, Doughton and Gould agreed closely on the fact that her initial ambitions were not focused solely on recognition as the end point. Gould's description of how federal recognition was meant to be a step on a path toward concrete gains for the community paralleled Doughton's description of earlier leadership. Gould explained to me how she saw CiscoeBrough's work on federal recognition as related to a series of other projects which all centered on "community":

Zara's vision was, going back to the 1970s—and then you know, hoping that that could get realized through federal [recognition]—it was never about casinos. People don't understand that, like the Indian Game Regulatory Act didn't even

⁸⁵ This is the perspective of one interviewee, which I recount here to show how much the notion of "programs" mattered to him. Other interviewees do see important ways that the recognition work enabled or related to other projects, a view that seems justifiable.

come into play (laughs) until 1988. . . Gaming was not even like part of the picture. It was—It was a community. . . she wanted to have another place, a satellite place. We were going to take over the . . . Grafton State Hospital. It was going to be surplus property of the state, and she was like, oh, well, there’s a rule on the books. Like we should get it back, da, da, da, she—and they sold it to Tufts for \$1, and she wanted to get that. Yeah, and she had like—drawings. She had plans for like what it would be. And then she had an organizational structure of who was going to do what, and we were going to have like, you know, crafts, and we were going to have language, and we were going to have gardening, and she had all of this stuff in her head, and like this vision for us as a people and how we would maintain our identity and presence of our culture. (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author)

The list of “[what] we were going to have” that Gould mentions here could easily be described as programs in crafts, language, gardening and more, to use Doughton’s terminology.⁸⁶ I remarked to Gould that it seemed like one of the things I was hearing from different people was the commonality of these motivations, even among those who disagree on much else or have not, throughout history, gotten along. She laughed—a bit bitterly—and replied, “We all wanted the same things.”

Health, Education, and Welfare “to sustain us”

As I started listening for this theme in the interviews, it became clear that although people agreed the quest for recognition in recent decades has concerned sovereignty and self-government as well as identity, this had not always been the case. Earlier on, recognition had been a means to an end, one possible route for pursuing access to programs and services, or for the creation of new programs that could support the Nipmuc community and help Nipmuc people to thrive. The eldest person I spoke to,

⁸⁶ Other similarities abound, too: the idea of getting an additional land base that could be developed in this way came up again, after CiscoeBrough’s lifetime, through the Nipmuc Tribal Acknowledgment Project (NTAP), in which Doughton had been closely involved, which sought to acquire land in the Sturbridge area and to pursue Congressional acknowledgment (Doughton 2014).

Donald Gould, Rae's father and a longtime member of the Nipmuc Nation tribal council, was the only one of my interviewees not to mention the two-part understanding of recognition that I detailed at the beginning of this chapter. When I asked him about the earliest motivations for pursuing recognition, he did not say that the point of recognition was to gain recognition—a common reply from some of the younger interviewees. Instead, he replied, “Yeah, well, they wanted recognition, of course, *you know, to sustain us*. And if we did get federal recognized, we'd—you know, health, education, welfare, we would've been entitled to that. Without casinos!” (D. Gould 2018, interview with author 2018, emphasis mine). Though he used different language, the content of what he referred to—“health, education, and welfare”—could certainly be described in the language that Rae Gould and Thomas Doughton had used: “programs” and “services.”

A Change Over Time

Though the number of individuals I was able to speak with at length in the Nipmuc community was limited (a general limitation of this study) and I could not speak directly with leadership figures who were long deceased, the interviews certainly did suggest that the predominant orientation to federal recognition had changed over time. Even those who disagreed on other points, like Rae Gould and Thomas Doughton, agreed that there had been a shift in the early to mid-1990s, around the time that casino investors became involved.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Doughton had been part of a group working toward the recovery of trust funds that had been lost and stolen in the 19th century. This group attempted to pursue Congressional acknowledgment and related economic

development in central Massachusetts. They got state politicians on board with their plans by promising that Nipmucs would renounce federal gaming rights if other support could be provided at the state level. For Doughton's group, the renouncement of gaming represented a powerful bargaining chip in an environment of widespread anti-gaming public sentiment. He described the entry of the casino investors onto the scene dramatically, training his eyes on mine and beginning, "What happened was much like the serpent in the garden." The casino investors, he explained, "showed up" and their perspective was that Nipmucs didn't need to make concessions to secure Congressional recognition by agreeing to give up rights to high stakes gaming operations. They came around saying, "This is how much money you're going to make [once you're federally recognized, with your own casino]" (Doughton 2018, interview with the author). Existing scholarship on developments not far to the south in Connecticut certainly seemed to support this narrative.⁸⁷ Rae Gould described this moment in slightly different terms but along parallel lines. By the late 1990s, she said, "people were seeing dollar signs." Rae Gould, Donald Gould, and Thomas Doughton's descriptions of how recognition had once been about programs and services demonstrated that, at one point, things had been different. Initially the pursuit of recognition was not focused on casinos or even on sovereignty, but on other concrete goals related to serving the community, especially through programs and services.

⁸⁷ See Cramer (2005) on Connecticut and Cattelino (2010) on parallel cases and overarching patterns nationally.

A Transformation of the Meaning of Recognition—But at What Scale?

As I read and re-read these interviews, the distinction that my interlocutors were making here struck me as more and more important. Yes, they did understand recognition today, and in recent decades, to have meant recognition of sovereignty and recognition of identity. However, those interviewees who had the most historical knowledge of the period *before* the most recent recognition work, either from their own personal experience or from their study of the history, all suggested that during the earlier period, recognition had been a means to an end and that the end could be described in terms of “programs” and “services,” or “health, education, and welfare” as resources that would “sustain us” (D. Gould 2018, interview with the author) or “maintain our identity and the presence of our culture” (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author).

The predominant way my Nipmuc interviewees talked about recognition today, as mediating access to the acknowledgment of identity and sovereignty, clearly matches national-scale discourse of the 1990s and 2000s, as I have demonstrated above. When I noticed that some of my interviewees talked about recognition during the earlier years of Nipmuc efforts to gain recognition in quite a different way, this raised a question: Was the idea that recognition constituted an important route to programs and services *also* a prominent concept at the national scale, if, perhaps, at a different point in time?

Both Rae Gould and Thomas Doughton had talked about Zara CiscoeBrough when they spoke about programs and services. CiscoeBrough had been involved in national-level organizing efforts, so it is possible that this earlier understanding was also shared with national-scale organizing among non-federally recognized tribes; however, it was not initially clear to me that this was necessarily the case. I turned to historical

sources from CiscoeBrough's early engagements with the national recognition movement at its origin point, the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC) of 1961.

The American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC), Origin Point for the National Recognition Movement

The AICC was the first major national convening and participatory visioning process on the goals and aspirations of Native Americans to clearly include Native Americans from non-federally recognized tribes.⁸⁸ Though it centered Native Americans' views on the social, political, and economic problems they faced and possible solutions, the AICC was not an organic product of American Indian organizing. Holding a national convention of this kind was the idea of anthropologist Sol Tax who pursued the project in accordance with the tenets of community-directed research that were the core of his "action anthropology" approach to research. Experts and outsiders could play a role, but it would be a supporting role; the participation and voices of Indigenous attendees were paramount. That said, there were a few ways in which Tax himself had a strong influence on the form and content of the meeting, and one of these was the inclusion of non-federally recognized tribes. The fact that Tax was adamant that non-federally recognized groups be included in the AICC turned out to be critical for Nipmuc people and other non-federally recognized tribes. The meeting itself and the regional and national-scale

⁸⁸ As was common in the early 1960s, documents from the AICC refer to Indigenous people of the territories claimed by the United States as "Indians" and as "American Indians," terms that politically engaged Native Americans from that time used as well, not just anthropologists like Tax or government agencies. I continue to use the wording "Indigenous" or "Native American" that I have used elsewhere in this dissertation except in quotes and proper names from these, where the wording "Indian" or "American Indian" is used. One exception is my use of the term "Indian programs" which was a specific term used at this time to refer to a whole swath of federal programs, across different agencies that had Native Americans (individually or as tribes) as their prime constituency. I use that term as it was used at the time because of its particularity and its embeddedness within this particular historical context.

conversations that it sparked to among non-federally recognized Native Americans later proved to be critical to the growth of the national recognition movement during the remainder of the 20th century (Hauptman and Campisi 1988; Klopotek 2011).⁸⁹

AICC was not just a single national scale meeting. The “convocation” in Chicago in 1961 was preceded by a long participatory process of regional meetings and information-gathering, especially from those who could not attend the meeting in-person. A year ahead of the meeting, Tax, with the assistance of anthropologist Nancy Lurie as assistant coordinator, sent out an early draft of what would become the *Declaration* along with information and requests for input to as many individual Native Americans and Native America communities as they could identify. Working from a set of existing contacts and mailing lists, Tax and Lurie requested that information about the AICC be shared and that further addresses for interested persons be sent back to the coordinators. Then, before the Chicago meeting, regional meetings were organized, mostly at educational institutions, in nine regions, including the South and East where the majority of tribes were not federally recognized (Lurie 1961). Contributions from this outreach and the regional meetings were included in the drafting of the final text of the *Declaration* in Chicago in 1961.

Although she did not attend the meeting in 1961, Hassanamisco Nipmuc Zara CiscoeBrough corresponded with Tax by mail ahead of the convocation in Chicago. She sent input on how to reform the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a prominent element of early drafts that was ultimately minimized in the *Declaration* itself (Hauptman and Campisi

⁸⁹ CiscoeBrough is one of several women leaders from New England who contributed prominently to the AICC by mail, although CiscoeBrough did not attend the Chicago meeting in person (Hauptman and Campisi 1988).

1988, 325). Because it provides an early point of engagement between Nipmuc leaders and national-scale organizing around non-recognition, the AICC provides a perfect opportunity to examine whether the orientation to recognition as a possible pathway to programs and services to care for Nipmuc “health, education, and welfare” that my interviewees talked about in 2018 was in fact an early feature of national-scale organizing on recognition, or whether it represents an orientation limited to the local or regional scale of Nipmuc and wider Indigenous communities in southern New England.

Examining the AICC as Representative of the National Scale

Two sources make the content of the AICC readily accessible today: Nancy Lurie’s (1961) extensive contemporary account of the AICC, written for an academic journal in the months following the main event in Chicago in 1961 and the *Declaration of Indian Purpose* (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961) itself, the document that was finalized during the convening in Chicago and circulated to the federal authorities afterward. Though close readings of these two documents I show that the idea that recognition was important because it mediated access to programs and services was indeed a very salient idea at the national scale in the early 1960s. Both sources reveal an orientation to non-recognition as a problem in terms of the lack of access to programs and services that non-federally recognized Indians experienced compared with the membership of federally recognized tribes. They also give a deeper sense of the challenges of the historical moment from which this orientation developed.

Lurie’s Account of the AICC

At the outset of her account, Lurie notes that the AICC was sparked in part by the disinvestment and withdrawal of federal government programs and services on

reservations. An unwillingness to commit resources to improve life on the reservations accompanied the termination and relocation initiatives of the mid-1940s and 1950s precisely because the logic of termination demanded no long-term commitment to the perpetuation of life on reservations: “Money for health facilities, and long term loans for tribal enterprises and resource development had been withheld since such activities imply community perpetuation” (Lurie 1961, 481). The view from 1960 stood in stark contrast to what an earlier generation had experienced during the reinvestment in reservation communities and tribal governance as a part of John Collier’s Indian New Deal in the 1930s (Kehoe 2014).

The withdrawal of programs and services had the effect of drawing attention to the conditions landless and non-federally recognized Indians already faced. Lurie explained that the relocation initiatives sparked debates in Indian country about the kinds of “programs” that should be embraced or opposed, with reservation-based Indians fearing that urban and landless groups would compromise on land rights for the sake of a policy that improved the conditions of life off-reservation:

It was feared that *programs* designed to provide Indians with specific help, but which threatened Indian lands, would not be opposed by landless Indians who had nothing to lose and everything to gain. On the other side, landless tribes, often maintaining their distinctive communities in the face of prejudice and hostility because they maintain Indian cultures sometimes feel antagonistic to reservation Indians, who have their own lands and many special *services*. (Lurie 1961, 481, my emphasis)

“Programs” and “services” are keywords in Lurie’s account of the conditions that set the stage for the AICC and the particular tensions that arose when Indians assembled to articulate their common vision in 1961.

Programs and services—whatever form they would take—were the primary policy interventions that could address the “specific problems” around which Indians could advocate for their interests to Washington. Lurie (1983, 483) highlights that throughout the drafting of what would later become the *Declaration*, concrete recommendations were made in regard to a host of particular matters of “health, education, and welfare in its broadest sense.” Indeed, both the text of and margin comments on earlier versions of the *Declaration*, selections of which were published by Lurie, make clear mention of “programs” and “services” (see Lurie 1961, 484). Letters both in support of and opposition to the draft text focus substantially on “services” and federal government “programming.” Leaders of non-federally recognized communities wrote in with concerns about education, land policy, and taxation, and in support of services for the unemployed and the elderly (Lurie 1961, 487).

The Declaration of Indian Purpose (1961)

The final text of the *Declaration* mentions programs and services prominently throughout many of its sections, particularly in the “Legislative and Regulatory Proposals” section, which takes up much of the body of the text. This section contains six sub-headings: “Resource and Economic Development,” “Health,” “Welfare,” “Housing,” “Education,” and “Law and Jurisdiction.” Even the sub-headings themselves, taken as a set, call up the universalist liberal positivism of the post-war mid-century, almost quoting the name of Health, Education, and Welfare, the agency in charge of universalist anti-poverty measures in 1961 (successor to the New Deal Federal Securities Administration). Across the different sub-headings, the AICC proposes a mix of improvements to Indian access to universal programs and services and community control of programs. For

instance, the recommendations under “Resource and Economic Development” cover concerns with employment as well as with participation in decision-making about “programs” and how they are managed (American Indian Chicago Conference, 5–8).

Throughout the *Declaration*, the language of “programs” and “services” is pervasive and strongly linked to issues of access to mainstream, universal measures for public health, education, and welfare. The “Health” section focuses on services; not just Indian health services but *public* health services and problems with Indians’ access to these. The section on “Welfare” expresses overt support for a minimum guaranteed income for Indians; it emphasizes the responsibility of federal programs to provide for Indian welfare where local ones do not, be it due to discrimination or oversight:

Should state and county welfare assistance programs not meet this minimum, then a federal grant of Indian assistance should be established in these cases. Such grants will be considered sufficient when, if added to the county or state contribution, they would permit a reasonable subsistence compatible with health, well-being and decency and provide assurances against discrimination by welfare officials. (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 11)

The framing of the issue is remarkably universalistic, fundamentally different from the kind of justifications for government support of Indian communities that would be articulated in later decades. Of the topical headers that follow, housing and education are presented as federal responsibilities. Here, the writers emphasize that federal programs and institutions should step in, especially where local public options are discriminatory, nonexistent, or otherwise unsuitable.

As a whole, the proposals emphasize both access to basic universal rights to education, health, employment, and sustenance *and* influence over decision making where questions of how to plan for the future might be more open-ended. Throughout, the *Declaration* maintains the stance (also emphasized by Lurie [1961]) that Indians seek

access to modern housing, education, employment, and healthcare but they do not understand such access to entail assimilation. They maintain that they can access these institutions and spheres without adopting “white” values. A role for Indians themselves in envisioning and pursuing economic, educational, and other projects is repeatedly emphasized.

One of the elements of the *Declaration* that is so valuable as a snapshot of the emerging recognition movement among non-federally recognized Indians is the unwillingness of its authors and signatories to accept federally recognized tribes as the default unit for the control of programs that would serve Indians. Early on, when recommending better access to federal welfare, the *Declaration* mentions that a new policy should provide adequate benefits for “all . . . classifications of Indians” (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 10). The problem of differential access to federal services, programs, and protections between different “classifications of Indian” gets its own section later in the document, after the legislative and regulatory proposals.

The section title, “Indians to be served,” employs federal legal language and emphasizes the idea of federal responsibility for services for all Indians. This section highlights the importance of who is considered Indian when defining the service population for programs and services, linking this access directly to the living conditions that Indians experience. Here, the *Declaration* includes a special mention of “the situation of those Indian groups, mostly in the East and the South, for whom no lands were ever reserved under federal law and for whom no federal services have ever been provided” (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 18). The *Declaration* takes a firm stance on the problems confronting such groups and frames them explicitly in terms of

both what Lurie called “the specific problems” and in terms of a lack of respect and social acknowledgment, which is to say both in terms of redistributive justice *and* in terms of recognition:

We say emphatically that the problems of health, education, economic distress, and social non-acceptance rest as heavily on all the Indians in these categories [non-reservation and off-reservation] as they do on the reservation Indians, and possibly more heavily. (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 17)

In this section, the writers point out their awareness that not all Indians are counted as “Indians to be served” and that disenfranchisement from programs and services exacerbated negative outcomes while, at the same time, lack of a formally designated federally recognized status did not diminish the problems of stigma and racism that non-federally recognized Indians continued to confront.

The *Declaration* asserts rights to self-determination and a role in running their own programs for all classes of Indians, not only federally recognized tribes. For example, the *Declaration* points out the need for “urban Indian centers,” and insists that they “should be in the hands of the Indian people it presumes to serve” but also supported by federal subsidy (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 16). At the AICC, Native Americans were clearly advocating for meaningful participation in the self-administration of federally funded Indian programs—and they were insisting that this extend to all Native Americans, regardless of tribal affiliation (reservation or non-reservation tribe) and location (on- or off-reservation).

Once Again, Nipmuc Conceptions are Congruent with National-Scale Notions

Quite clearly, both in Lurie’s (1961) account and in the text of the *Declaration*, concern with access to programs and services was a central issue at the AICC. Not only

that, the gathering was clearly also concerned with the exclusion of non-federally recognized groups from federal programs and services based on their lack of federal recognition. The preoccupation with programs and services that is evident in historical sources from the AICC demonstrates that a concern with programs and services, or health, education, and welfare is not unique to the early Nipmuc recognition efforts. Indeed, these concerns are central to national-scale discourse from the early 1960s. Nipmuc understandings of their tribe's early motivations for pursuing recognition in terms of programs and services and "health, education, and welfare," are evidently part of a larger national discourse, in much the same way that the understanding of acknowledgment in terms of identity and sovereignty today also reflects a national scale.

Conclusion

Just as the later two-part understanding of recognition closely mirrors national-scale discourse on federal acknowledgment, the concern with programs and services that Nipmuc interviewees recollected also mirrors national-scale discourse. Given that CiscoeBrough was directly involved in these conversations and had a prominent role in shaping efforts to gain first state and then federal recognition for Nipmuc people, this is not a complete surprise. However, on another level, the relationship between the local conceptions of recognition among Nipmuc individuals and the ideas about recognition circulating in national discussions is notable.⁹⁰ This link to the national scale is an important foundational element of the experience of recognition for Nipmuc people and

⁹⁰ Here, I do not mean geographically local (as became important in their quest for recognition, Nipmuc people do not all live in a single locality). Instead I mean local in the sense of particular to a speech community of a less-than-national scale.

likely for other tribes that pursued recognition from the 1960s onward. This was not just a challenge or journey for individual tribes and their members, it was part of a larger picture, part of what Klopotek (2011, 23) has called a “national recognition movement.”

If viewed from a semiotic perspective, the earlier notion of recognition in which it is linked to access to programs and services, and the later meaning, linked to identity and sovereignty, can be thought of as two separate “semiotic regularities,” where that term indicates that a particular sign-form is understood to signal a particular referent (Agha 2007, 64). According to Agha (2007, 64–65) all semiotic regularities have a social domain, a group of people that recognize a particular relationship between a sign-form and a referent. Everyone in the social domain is a part of the same speech chain network; they are related to each other through a shared element in their individual histories of socialization that allows them to understand the same sign in the same way. In the case of the two semiotic regularities discussed here, the social domain is national in scale, even if it may be limited in the strict number of people who are engaged enough in issues of recognition and non-recognition of Native American tribes to understand this meaning.

The fact that Nipmuc individuals and representatives from other non-federally recognized tribes, both in the past and in more recent years, understood recognition in closely congruent terms speaks to the nature of the speech chain network in which they were involved. As I have demonstrated these meanings are shared with experts and scholarly voices in the more recent period, and this pattern likely holds true for the earlier period as well.⁹¹ The congruence of meanings between tribal communities and experts is

⁹¹ An analysis on this point is beyond the scope of the chapter. However, given the prominent role of experts in organizing the AICC and other venues for the discussion of the problems of non-recognition during the 1960s, I do believe that similarity across experts and tribal members would likely bear out in an

notable as a sign of the role of expertise in the pursuit of political forms of recognition for Indigenous peoples and how involvement in seeking recognition involves tribal members in experts' conceptualization of key terms, up to and including recognition itself.

Understanding these issues of scale and shared meaning is important to comprehending Indigenous experiences of recognition in the United States.

In establishing that such national scale meanings are distinct between an earlier and a later period of the recognition history, this chapter also opens another question. How were these meanings, which were circulating at a national scale, transformed through their use over a timescale of decades? In the next chapter, I take up this question, shifting to the national scale and then, ultimately, back to its impacts on the Nipmuc history, in order to show the influence of a larger political context on the form that Nipmuc political projects took over the decades that the community engaged with the federal government on the topic of recognition.

examination of the earlier period, just as it did with the later one, discussed in the earlier part of this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RECOGNITION AMONG NATIVE AMERICANS 1970–1990:

TRANSFORMED CONTEXT, TRANSFORMED CONCEPT

In the previous chapter, I established several things. First, I established that Nipmuc understandings of recognition today are closely linked to discourse on recognition that circulates at the national scale. In recent decades, Nipmuc people have understood federal acknowledgment to mediate public recognition of the legitimacy of Nipmuc identities and federal government recognition of the tribe's sovereignty, two entailments that are also emphasized in expert discourse about federal acknowledgment in general, not just the Nipmuc experience. However, a subset of the interviews I conducted in 2018 also suggested that this had not always been the predominant understanding of recognition among Nipmuc people. This set of three interviewees pointed to the earlier understanding of recognition as mediating access to government programs and services, an understanding of recognition that they recollected as important to early efforts to be recognized at the state and federal level, before the tribe began working with casino investors as backers for a federal acknowledgment petition in the 1990s. As with the contemporary understanding of recognition, examination of national-scale discourse on recognition and Native American tribes during the early 1960s confirmed that the understanding of recognition as important for its role in mediating access to programs and services was not limited to the Nipmuc case. This view was widespread among the early proponents of the national recognition movement that originated among non-federally recognized tribes around 1960 and developed through the

early part of the 21st century.⁹² In Chapter 3, I established not only that Nipmuc understandings of recognition were linked to the national scale then, but also that these national-scale understandings had changed at some point between the early years of the recognition movement and more recent decades.

In this chapter, I take up the question of how the meaning of recognition transformed between 1960 and the 1990s. I am interested in this question for what the answer can tell us about Nipmuc experiences of seeking recognition both before and after the introduction of the 1978 federal acknowledgment regulation establishing the administrative pathway that Nipmuc Nation attempted to utilize. I argue that transformations in the understanding of recognition over the timescale of decades were in part a result of broader changes in national political priorities that extended quite beyond the influence of non-federally recognized tribes. Non-federally recognized tribes had to put their demands in dialog with these prevailing political ideas in order to be heard. Moreover the decades from 1960 to 1990 saw real changes in the possibility of achieving early goals, like accessing federal Indian programs and services.⁹³ The way in which this happened, including the way that Nipmuc actors maintained their commitment to their own goals in the face of unfavorable circumstances, is important to understanding the power dynamics and strategies of resistance that characterized the history of non-federally recognized tribes' engagement with recognition from 1960 onward, up through the post-Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA 1988, Pub. L. 100-497) era which has

⁹² See Klopotek (2011) for the “national recognition movement” concept and a framing of the broad span of this history.

⁹³In general, I avoid using the term “Indian” in this dissertation. In this chapter, I do use the term “Indian programs” because of the significance of this term during the historical period I am studying. This was a catchall term used for programs directed at Native American constituencies both inside the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and in other federal agencies and offices. It is an important government concept that was also taken up by Native Americans, so I use the term that they did to refer to these programs.

been the focus of the preponderance of scholarship on tribes' experiences with federal acknowledgment thus far (e.g., Cramer 2005a, 2005b; Miller 2004; Klopotek 2011).⁹⁴

Because in Chapter 3 the national context was demonstrated to be so important to how Nipmuc people understood the very concept of recognition, in this chapter I draw meaningfully on historical sources that help to illuminate developments at the *national scale*, only returning to content from my own interviews with Nipmuc interlocutors in the final section of this chapter. I draw on a variety of sources including Congressional reports, regulatory texts, and laws, and I use existing historical scholarship to help contextualize these. Ultimately, this national context is critical to interpreting the actions of Nipmuc leaders who engaged with the government apparatus related to acknowledgment after 1978. Though Nipmuc people did not control the terms of recognition established from the late 1970s onward, they did develop covert ways of pursuing their own longstanding goals in the context of ever-changing national politics, policy-frameworks, and funding opportunities.

Outline of the Chapter

I begin this chapter by establishing the continuity of non-federally recognized tribes' concerns about their lack of access to federal programs and services. Already, in Chapter 3 I established that this was a major preoccupation in 1961 at the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC), often identified as the origin point for the national recognition movement (Hauptman and Campisi 1988; Klopotek 2011; Den Ouden and

⁹⁴ Histories that address both federal acknowledgment and state forms of recognition more often address the earlier forms of acknowledgment that long precede the federal acknowledgment of the second half of the 20th century. See, for instance, Den Ouden (2013) on Connecticut or O'Brien (2003) on Massachusetts.

O'Brien 2013). Here, I provide evidence from the 1976 report of Task Force Ten, a component of the larger American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIPRC) that sought to investigate the situation of Native Americans across the country in terms of a number of topics of concern. Task Force Ten was dedicated to documenting the situation of terminated and non-federally recognized tribes. The testimony and recommendations in the report demonstrate continuities between the focus on programs and services already evident in 1961, at the time of the AICC, the discourse of leaders among New England Native people in the mid-1970s. I established that any transformation in non-recognized tribes' understandings of recognition took place after this point.

Given the later links between the administrative federal acknowledgment process and notions of identity and sovereignty as linked to recognition, one might suspect that this transformation took place through the creation of the federal acknowledgment regulation in 1978. After all, this regulation did institute criteria focused on identity and sovereignty. In the second section of this chapter, I demonstrate that the proposal for establishing a new office and process for acknowledgment of non-federally recognized tribes may have contained the seeds of this transformation but also strongly agreed that access to programs and services was of paramount importance.

In the third section of this chapter, I show how a series of historical events that happened to follow closely on the introduction of the 1978 regulation helped to channel federally recognized tribes into engagement with the acknowledgment apparatus. Cuts to the very federal programs that, in 1976, non-federally recognized tribes had used to administer programs serving their own communities helped to channel non-federally recognized tribes into the pursuit of federal acknowledgment, even where the same

leaders had, in some cases, clearly opposed the extension of recognized status as recently as 1976. Finally, at the close of this section, I return to the content of one of the interviews I conducted in 2018 to consider how Nipmuc people maintained their commitment to administering their own programs even as they began to engage with federal funding opportunities explicitly tied to federal acknowledgment. Using the context established earlier in the chapter, I consider what these covert strategies for pursuing their own priorities can tell us about Nipmuc experiences with political recognition.

Ultimately, by investigating the transformation of the meaning of recognition, in this chapter I am able to demonstrate that tribes' initial interest in recognition—because of the way it conditioned access to programs and services—persisted over a much longer time period than one might imagine. Long-term processes and intensive engagement with the new federal acknowledgment programs and institutions, in combination with changes in broader political discourse from the 1970s to the 1990s, were required to set the stage for such a change. Evidence from the Nipmuc case suggests that even where non-federally recognized groups did begin to engage with acknowledgment-related programs, some initially did so in accordance with longstanding motivations around accessing programs rather than because of a belief in the importance of federal acknowledgment in the terms that federal actors understood it as a legal imperative.

This chapter demonstrates that non-federally recognized tribes have had to contend with constantly shifting opportunities to engage with federal authorities, with recognition initially providing only one domain of a much bigger policy space. As other spaces were closed off over the course of decades, non-federally recognized tribes were

channeled into the federal acknowledgment pathway as the only way to pursue access to programs and services. The understanding of recognition evident today, which links recognition to both identity and sovereignty, emerged in the context of the latest period of the national recognition movement, as tribes entered the petitioning process and engaged with the federal acknowledgment office and—often—with financial backers for the expensive and time-consuming work involved in federal acknowledgment. As I discuss in the conclusion to the chapter, this history demonstrates the central role of powerful institutions in reshaping the context in which Native Americans developed their own thinking and political priorities around recognition. Though this history demonstrates an important degree of resistance to federal authorities’ distinct framing of the concept, it also demonstrates the degree to which later notions of recognition emerged from an institutional landscape that non-federally recognized tribes engaged with but did not control.

Continuity from 1960 to the Mid-1970s

In 1961, when Native Americans representing the diversity of Indigenous experiences across the US participated in the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC), the fact that some groups lacked federal recognition was one of the challenges raised in the preliminary regional meetings, in correspondence, and at the convocation itself (see Chapter 3; Lurie 1961; American Indian Chicago Conference 1961). Non-recognition was considered a problem primarily because it hindered members of non-federally recognized groups from accessing federal programs and services designated for Native Americans. Indigenous people faced barriers in accessing mainstream welfare programs

and the AICC's *Declaration of Indian Purpose* clearly articulated the stance that federal authorities have an obligation to provide programs and services to Native Americans, ideally with their own substantive participation in how these initiatives are run (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 16).

To an extent, the 1960s did see an increase in Native Americans participation in decision-making affecting their communities. During that decade, the idea of involving troubled groups in government solutions to their problems, an idea closely related to how Lyndon B. Johnson had organized the AICC, became a mainstream idea. During the Johnson administration, many War on Poverty programs were run with the ethos that participation in solving problems of poverty would have its own beneficial effects on the subjectivity of the impoverished (Cruikshank 2019), and federal Indian programs created through the broader War on Poverty initiatives likewise took up Native Americans' involvement in running their own programs as a cornerstone of the policies of that era (Cobb 1998). Though the programs of the Office of Equal Opportunity's (OEO) "Indian Desk" (or Indian Office) initially applied only to reservation tribes, its Indian Community Action program was eventually expanded to urban and non-reservation groups (Castile 1998).⁹⁵

The existence of these programs outside the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), operated in a much less top-down fashion, changed the landscape of Indian programs during the course of the Johnson administration (Castile 1998). Scholars have recently noted that a change in poor peoples' expectations for their role in government was the major outcome of the War on Poverty programs (which did not, after all, end poverty in

⁹⁵ Rather than being run through the states, what were colloquially called "Indian Desk" programs were centralized under a national office in Washington, headed for most of its existence by James J. Wilson, Lakota. For more on Wilson's accomplishments and influence, see Chapter 5 in *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Cobb 2008).

America) (Cruikshank 2019). The same effect has been noted regarding Indian Community Action; these programs changed Native Americans experience of engaging with federal government programs (Castile 1998).

By the 1970s, the idea that affected communities should be participants in designing solutions to their problems was mainstream in America in a way it had not been even a decade earlier. Native American activism and advocacy was also reaching a new peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s through a confluence of the efforts of an older generation of reformers and a younger generation of radical activists (Cobb 2008, 1–2). While the established political organizers cultivated allies in Congress, the media attention to militant activists helped push Native American concerns into the spotlight. In 1973, Congress established by Joint Committee the American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIPRC), the most extensive investigation into the contemporary situation of Native Americans since the Meriam Report in 1928.

Unlike the Meriam Report, which had centered outside experts, the AIPRC was designed to more directly involve Native Americans themselves in the investigation and information gathering the Commission would undertake. The American Indian Policy Review Commission was comprised of a set of eleven task forces that would examine distinct topics of concern. Each task force would conduct an initial stage of gathering information and making recommendations, which would be delivered back to the main Commission comprised of leaders in national Native American politics and Congresspeople. By 1973—in part through efforts in the courts and through protests—the problems of non-federally recognized tribes were a prominent enough topic in Indian Affairs to be included as the focal point of one of the 11 task forces.

The very existence of Task Force Ten shows how much more political attention the problem of non-recognition was getting in the 1970s as compared to the early 1960s. During the 1960s and into the early 1970s, the climate in Indian affairs shifted unevenly from the termination and relocation agenda of the 1950s toward a focus on “self-determination,” by which the Nixon administration primarily meant the practice of contracting out programs and services to be run by reservation communities (Castile 1998). This practice, inspired by the success of Johnson’s Indian community action programs, also aligned well with the priorities of the Nixon administration that advocated for the devolution of federal programs to the states, or in the case of Native Americans, devolution from the federal government to individual tribes. Though devolution as often as not improved the programs and services on reservations, it also left an increasing gap between reservation and non-reservation communities. Those tribes that had been terminated or had never been federally recognized did not have a recognized tribal government to which the federal government could devolve programs and services through contracting.

As more and more programs were contracted out, terminated and non-federally recognized Indians, along with individuals living in urban centers away from their tribes’ reservations, found themselves relying on Indians programs available through agencies other than the BIA or trying to access mainstream welfare and unemployment systems. Mainstream systems were already strapped as the country faced the stagflation crisis moving into the middle of the decade (Weir 1992, 103), adding additional challenges for Native Americans unable to access BIA programs and services. By the 1973, when Congress resolved to form the AIPRC, some programs and services were accessible to

non-reservation groups and individuals of Indian descent, while others were only available to federally recognized tribes and their members. The clear contradictions of this situation, along with recent court victories related to non-federally recognized tribes, helped to raise the profile of the problems of non-recognition and likely assured this once-overlooked constituency its own task force as part of the AIPRC.

The report Task Force Ten produced in 1976 includes both testimony from hearings the task force organized across the US, summaries of the findings, and recommendations about what should be done about the problems identified. Task Force Ten focused explicitly on the situation of terminated and non-federally recognized tribes. It was led by four members of non-federally recognized tribes, two of the four from New England, and one member of a terminated tribe.⁹⁶ The Task Force Ten report represents the first source of its scale and scope focusing specifically on this subset of the Native American population, and for many non-federally recognized tribes, interactions with Task Force Ten represented a rare occasion to present their case to a sympathetic audience (Klopotek 2011, 29).

The authors of the Task Force Ten report stated in their introduction that they intended the final report to serve as a future reference for the situations and stances of non-recognized tribes and to counter the dearth of documentation about these groups and the challenges they faced.⁹⁷ The report consists largely of collated testimony from hearings conducted with members and leaders of non-federally recognized and

⁹⁶ Jo Jo Hunt (Lumbee), Robert Bojorcas (Klamath), George Tomer (Penobscot-Maliseet), and John Stevens (Passamaquoddy) (Task Force 10, 1976, I; Klopotek 2011, 28).

⁹⁷ The introductory letter upon the delivery of the report to Congress in 1976 states: ““We have reported our findings, but have also accumulated testimony and materials in the files of great informational value which we hope will be preserved in a readily available form for future reference” (AIPRC 1976, iii).

terminated tribes across the country, accompanied by summaries of the problems as the Task Force came to understand them, both regionally and generally, followed by findings and recommendations.⁹⁸ The vast majority of the report is dedicated to the problems these groups encountered in trying to improve their own communities' conditions, their analyses of what about federal policy has exacerbated these problems, and their ideas about what might be done about it.

Programs and Services in the Task Force Ten Report (1976)

The Task Force Ten Report is a key source demonstrating the continuity and evolution of non-federally recognized tribes' concerns with the impact their non-recognized status had on their ability to access federal programs and services. In the testimony from the report, Native American leaders from non-federally recognized tribes in New England focused substantially on their inability to consistently access federal programs that would fund their own efforts on behalf of their communities. The testimony, in particular, is an important source because it gives a sense of the issues of concern in Indians' own words.⁹⁹ The concern with programs and services is clearly evident in the report's recommendations as well.

⁹⁸ The other component of the report is the results, in charts and graphs, of the census project that Task Force Ten also carried out; I do not discuss that element of the report here.

⁹⁹ Task Force Ten took that same stance about the importance of firsthand contributions: "The Task Force, in this report, has included much of the information word-for-word that Indian people have provided to Task Force #10. Only the people themselves can tell the real story and make the recommendations" (Task Force Ten 1976, 6–7). Because of the close connections between many leadership figures in Native New England, across different tribal affiliations, and because of the length of the full Task Force Ten report, I focus my analysis below on the New England testimony. To show the congruence of these comments with the bigger national scale of Task Force Ten, I also include an analysis of the recommendations about what should be done about the situation of non-federally recognized tribes on the national scale, which appears at the end of the report. The testimony from Nipmucs included in the report is limited to comments from Zara CiscoeBrough on negative experiences with the mainstream medical establishment, but other themes from

Testimony Highlights a Lack of Access to Federal Programs and Services, Dismisses

“Recognition”

Lack of adequate programs and services was a main focus of the 1975 Boston Hearing testimony, both from tribal leaders and leaders of organizations serving Indians from a variety of tribes. Far from being pitted against other issues like land loss, the lack of programs and services was understood to compound these problems. Looking across the testimony provided by a diversity of speakers reveals how common concerns unite a diversity of leadership figures.

Bryan Miles (Mohegan) of American Indians for Development (AID), a consortium-format organization seeking to provide support to Indians in Connecticut, testified to the urgency of the problems faced and the inability to get funding to assist people, even where organizations had been founded to do so and had been able to access some federal programs. “Indians are hurting now,” Myles pointed out, despite the limited progress organizations like AID had been able to make, in part by utilizing existing federal programs that had earmarked Indians as a core constituency for the legislation, with their own special provisions.

There are some Indians who can go home and eat and keep a roof over their head. If they pull CETA out now, that would be it, because there are . . . no Indian Education moneys in Connecticut. There are no ONAP¹⁰⁰ moneys in Connecticut.

her involvement in the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) in the years leading up to the Boston Hearing appear prominently in the testimony of other New England Indians that was included in the final report. The full text of the reports from the early years of the MCIA are now available online as well as in print copies at libraries (public online access through Boston Public Library Interlibrary Loan: <https://archive.org/details/bplill>). Through her work with the MCIA, CiscoBrough was involved in issues from education to housing to representation of Indian voices in the public decision-making process, and beyond. I was not able to access the original transcriptions of the hearing testimony at this stage of the work for the dissertation, but I hope to access CiscoBrough’s contributions for a future revision of this chapter into a publishable article.

¹⁰⁰ The Office of Native American Programs (ONAP) was the successor agency to the Indian Desk at the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) during the Johnson administration. By the time Nixon entered office, many War on Poverty programs were embattled and had been cut back. The Indian Desk’s programs had undergone changes, too, in later years (Cobb 2008, 200–202), but they had, overall, been much more

There are no EDA moneys in Connecticut. There are no HUD dollars in Connecticut for Indians. *We can go right down for all the services. They are just not there . . .* we do not have the dollars to have the flexibility and we do not have the dollars to provide for the numbers of Indian people who are unemployed or underemployed. We do not have dollars to provide health services. We do not have any kind of dollars for leadership or for development as such. So far as that is concerned, Connecticut is really hurting as far as the Indian population is concerned. (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976, 81-82, emphasis mine)

Programs, services, and the funding for them are the main content of Myles's contribution, and his concerns about federal failings in this arena closely parallel those raised back in 1961, even as he focuses specifically on the programs of his own historical moment. He makes explicit mention here of a number of federal programs and agencies. HUD is the Housing and Urban Development authority at the federal level, a longstanding federal agency. CETA, on the other hand, is the Comprehensive Employment and Training Program (CETA), a 1973 law that created substantial "manpower programs" to help with unemployment during the stagflation crisis (CETA 1978, Pub. L. 93–203). Among other things, CETA created public service jobs at regional and local levels, paying for the positions with federal funds. However, it was a program created to address a particular crisis and the Nixon administration did not authorize it as a long-term solution, insisting its provisions would be temporary.¹⁰¹ This is what Myles refers to in the excerpt above, where he laments the precarity of those few federal funding sources that reach Connecticut Indians.

successful than the mainstream programs. Nixon "spun off" the successful OEO programs into other agencies and reduced the OEO to an experimental programs division. ONAP was the office created from the successful Indian Community Action Programs and during the early years of Nixon's presidency was relocated to the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) under Housing, Education, and Welfare (HEW) (Castile 1998, 81).

¹⁰¹ For more on CETA, though without much attention to the Native American component, see and Mucciaroni (1990) and Weir (1992).

CETA was important to non-federally recognized Indians because alongside its mainstream manpower programs, the law authorized the creation of Indian manpower programs to be run by entities or organizations approved by Indians themselves (CETA 1973, Section 302c2d, 858). CETA’s measures for Indians were explicit about their applicability to both federally recognized tribes *and* “other groups and individuals of Native American descent, such as, but not limited to, the Lummi in Washington, the Menominee in Wisconsin, the Klamath in Oregon, the Oklahoma Indians, the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot in Maine and the Eskimo and Aleut in Alaska” (CETA 1973, section 302b, page 858). While the Act names a number of both terminated and federally non-recognized groups, it also explicitly includes “individuals of Indian descent,” opening the provisions to those living off-reservation of unaffiliated with a particular tribe well-known on the national stage. The Act asserts a form of self-determination for all these groups—terminated, urban or off-reservation, and non-federally recognized.¹⁰²

CETA was a key example of a program that was not only accessible to non-federally recognized Indians, but that allowed them to run the programs. And yet, as Myles points out, it was a temporary initiative, so dependence on that program alone was an acutely felt problem. In highlighting the precarity of funding, Myles points to the same perennial problems that were a central focus of the *Declaration of Indian Purpose* fifteen years prior. Federal programs and services for Indians are, by and large, not available to

¹⁰² Section 302c2d reads: “The Congress declared that . . . [the programs covered by the Act] shall be administered in such a manner as to maximize the Federal commitment to support growth and development as determined by representatives of the communities served by [Section 302 of the Act]” (Section 302b, 858). Not only would the Indian programs be organized at the federal level rather than the state level, the prime sponsors would be Indian tribes or nonprofits selected by Indian communities themselves (“public or private non-profit agencies which meet with the approval of the tribes, bands, or groups to be served” [CETA 1973, Section 302c2d, 858]).

non-federally recognized Indians, and where such funding does exist, it is only available through temporary programs, like CETA. The consistency that might allow for enough predictability to tackle systemic problems is just not there, more than a decade after the *Declaration* highlighted the need for public funds to support Indians without a time horizon for discontinuance (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961; Lurie 1961).

The tone of the testimony from different individuals at the Boston Hearing varies, but the content is remarkably consistent. Where Myles expressed discouragement, dismay, and worry about this state of affairs, Richard Hayward of the Mashantucket Pequot tribe expressed skepticism, indeed outrage, at the inability of Pequots to access federally funded services that other tribes—recognized tribes—had access to. After referring to the centuries of marginalization New England Indians had endured, he posed a wrenching rhetorical question to the Task Force, addressing them as representatives of the government: “Is this how you finally try to put an end to us, *by denying us services* that would allow us to return to our reservation and survive as an Indian community so that we might flourish and prosper?” (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976, 1684, emphasis mine). Mashantucket Pequots, though not federally recognized in 1976, did have a small reservation designated as such by the state of Connecticut, rather than the federal government. For Hayward, land and services were not distinct issues but rather compounding ones; denial of services presented an important barrier to Pequots being able to occupy the limited reservation lands they still had.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Elsewhere in his testimony he detailed the deplorable living conditions on the reservation and the ignorance and lack of compassion of the state agencies tasked with managing the reservation’s upkeep. With his reference to “services,” Hayward may also have been referring to the lack of health services for Indians in New England; certainly, the lack accessible healthcare near the rural Mashantucket reservation land would have been a problem. The Task Force Ten report includes the following testimony submitted to a House hearing by New England organizations: “Conditions of poverty are pervasive throughout the New England Indian community . . . Indian people cannot afford to purchase health insurance nor can they

It is clear in the Task Force Ten report that by 1976, Indian leaders in New England were prepared to try to take leadership in their own communities on the issues of unemployment, housing, education, and healthcare that they found to be the most pressing problems their people faced. This was especially the case after the rise of the politics of empowerment that had held sway throughout the 1960s, raising marginalized groups' expectations about how they might be involved in solutions to the problems they faced (Cruikshank 2019). Yet, they found themselves shut out of the majority of federal programs and services designed to address these problems, a reality that added insult to injury. Hayward's testimony offers an indictment of the whole notion of federal recognition as a standard for accessing federal benefits, programs, and services:

Where does recognition come from? What does it mean? The policy of dealing only with, dealing with so-called recognized tribes is totally arbitrary. . . so why does this Committee come here and address us as unrecognized tribes? And I resent the implication that I am a second-class Indian. (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976, 1684)

The stance Hayward expresses here seems to demonstrate that he, and perhaps other Native people in New England, not only saw the need for programs and services but also saw non-recognized status as the denial of a full-status Indian identity. Overall, Hayward's testimony represents an example where demands for programs and services come together with concerns about tribal lands and the acknowledgment of identity. And yet, Hayward takes a clear stance *against* recognition. At this point, in 1976, Hayward understood some of the elements later linked to recognition as instead linked to one another and linked to the long-held point about the need for federal programs and

generally pay for their own health care needs. Frequently needs go unattended. Nowhere in New England is there a comprehensive healthcare system to deal with the needs of Indian people" (Task Force Ten, 1976, 134, citing House testimony, Attachment 07, Testimony submitted by New England organizations on H.R. 2525 to House of Representatives, page 4.)

services, but not as linked to recognition. It is well known that the Mashantucket Pequots, with Hayward in leadership, would later pursue federal acknowledgment through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and, later, successfully through Congress.¹⁰⁴ And yet, in the spring of 1976, when the idea of regulations governing a BIA process for recognition had yet to be proposed, Hayward spoke strongly in favor of *removing* the distinction between recognized and unrecognized tribes, *not* of recognition being extended to tribes like his own.

Recommendations Demand an End to the Recognized/Non-recognized Distinction

The stance taken by the Task Force in their findings and recommendations at the conclusion of the 1976 report mirrored Hayward's inditement of the federal government's concept of recognition as the key to Native Americans' rights and entitlements. The general findings and recommendations of Task Force Ten are not what one might expect of an information-gathering effort among non-recognized tribes just as a "national recognition movement" was gaining ground. The Task Force comes out *against* the idea of extending recognition, proposing instead that recognized status be abolished.

In a section of the report drafted by Thomas Tureen, a Native American Rights Fund (NARF) and Pine Tree Legal Services lawyer, who had argued the *Passamaquoddy* case, the report details how the use of federally recognized status as a way to deny not only rights, but access to programs and services as well, only originated in the legislation

¹⁰⁴ The Mashantucket Pequot recognition struggle appears in the scholarly literature on recognition (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Cramer 2006) and whole journalistic accounts have been dedicated to that single case (Eisler 2001; Benedict 2001).

passed during the Nixon administration (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976, 1660–1670).¹⁰⁵

Before that, federal recognition played a role in some laws, as in the Indian Reorganizing Act (IRA) of 1934, but there it is only used for those components of the Act that apply to tribes, not to individual Indians. Even in the mid-1970s, the only federal agency actively using the concept of recognition to guide access to their programs was the Department of the Interior (DOI) and its Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Office of Native American Programs (ONAP), the successor to Johnson’s Indian Community Action, did not use the concept, nor did programs target Native Americans within other agencies like Health, Education, and Welfare or, for that matter, the Department of Labor and programs under its purview, like CETA.

In the recommendations section of the report, Task Force Ten advises that all distinctions between federally recognized Indians and federally non-recognized (including terminated) Indians be erased, arguing that the still-recent *Passamaquoddy* decision clearly indicated that such distinctions had no basis in law. Following a direct critique of the limitation of applicability of Indian legislation to “federally recognized tribes” during the Nixon administration, the report’s final recommendations prescribed that the definition of Indians to be served should include all those descended from persons Indigenous to the United States:

¹⁰⁵ AIPRC Task Force Ten, 1976, Chapter V “Federal Recognition and the ‘Passamaquoddy’ Decision,” authored by Thomas N. Tureen of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) and the Indian Legal Services Unit of Pine Tree Legal Assistance, as a consultant to Task Force Ten. Elsewhere in this chapter, I have pointed out, only in brief, that the War on Poverty in many ways created the subjective and institutional landscape that fostered the recognition movement. Pine Tree Legal Assistance is a public service law firm that was created as a part of the Office of Economic Opportunity during the Johnson administration. Had it not existed, the story of tribe’s advocacy around recognition in New England might be quite different. Tureen was the originator of the winning legal argument that New England states had violated the Non-intercourse Acts of the late 18th century when they sold off tribal lands without Congressional approval. This was the basis of the majority of modern land-claims suits, 18 of which were in New England and involved tribes that were, in the 1960s and 1970s, federally non-recognized.

Congress should direct all federal departments and agencies to utilize the following definition: "American Indian or Indian" means any individual who is a member, or a descendant of a member, of a North American tribe, band or otherwise organized group of Native people who are indigenous to the continental United States or who otherwise have a special relationship with the United States or a state through treaty, agreement executive order, or statute [sic]. This includes any individual or Alaskan Native organization. (AIPRC Task Force Ten, 1976, 1701)

The explicit instructions that this definition should apply across *all* federal departments and agencies is a reference to the different definitions employed by different agencies. The definition here is closer to the one employed by HEW and its programs (including Indian Education and ONAP) and the Department of Labor in CETA than it is to the definition used by the BIA during the 1970s.

Task Force Ten's recommendations set "recognition" aside in favor of solutions to the problems of access to programs and services. In that way, the Task Force Ten recommendations reflect continuity with the 1961 *Declaration of Indian Purpose*. This reflects the interviews I conducted in 2018, in which Nipmuc interlocutors suggested that, at least initially, recognition had been a means to an end. By 1976, the discourse had become more legalistic but the central claims about the way "Indians to be served" should be defined are remarkably similar to those in the *Declaration*.

In 1976, access to programs and services was important to Indigenous leaders in New England, wherever those programs were to be found, whether in HEW, the DOL, or the BIA. The lack of access to federal programs reserved for federally recognized tribes was central to the complaints of many of those who spoke at the Boston Hearing and was equally a subject of attention by the writers of the Task Force Ten final report. In 1976, Task Force Ten, taking the lead from the testimony, did *not* recommend a path to recognition as the solution to the problem of non-recognized tribes. Instead, the Task

Force proposed abolition of the recognized/non-recognized distinction so that *all* Indian problems and service would be open to all people of Indigenous descent, regardless of tribal affiliation.

As such, the report mostly demonstrates continuity between 1961 and 1976; those engaged with the recognition issue were still very much concerned with programs and services fifteen years later. In this way, their conception of why recognition was important had not really changed. The difference here, seemingly related to the recent *Passamaquoddy* case, is that in 1976, some speakers at the Boston Hearing, and ultimately Task Force Ten itself, did not embrace the idea of extending recognition to non-federally recognized groups. Instead, they proposed doing away with federally recognized status, a designation that had only grown in importance since 1960 (Castile 1998).

Historical Conditions of the Transformation of the Recognition Concept

Having established the continuity in non-federally recognized tribes' understanding that recognition was important chiefly for the way it mediated access to programs and services, I turn now to how that steadfast position changed over the course of the decades that followed. It is tempting to locate this change in the introduction of the 1978 federal acknowledgment regulation; after all, as noted in the Introduction to this dissertation, the regulation does hold tribes to criteria focused on identity and political authority (CFR 25 § 83). In this chapter, however, I argue that the introduction of the federal acknowledgment regulation only forms one part of the conditions that eventually produced a widespread shift in the predominant meaning of “recognition” to Nipmuc

people and to others engaged with the federal acknowledgment process, whether as experts or as petitioning tribes. Even after the regulation came into force in 1978, it took a series of historically contingent developments linked to political changes that extended far beyond federal Indian policy to channel non-federally recognized tribes toward the administrative federal acknowledgment process and notion that recognition is primarily a matter of identity and sovereignty that became hegemonic within that context.

I begin this section by explaining briefly how the final report of the American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIPRC) took seriously Task Force Ten's concern about access to programs and services while, at the same time, proposing a radically different solution to that problem: a petitioning process much like the one that still exists for the acknowledgment of non-federally recognized tribes today. Then I clarify the ways in which the 1978 regulation, introduced by the BIA in the same year the AIPRC report was presented, takes up many elements of the AIPRC recommendations but also features crucial differences. After framing how these developments set the stage, I turn to how other events transpiring in 1978 and onward contributed to changing the direction on non-federally recognized tribes' attentions toward the new acknowledgment process, initially as a possible route to achieving their longtime goal of providing their communities with programs and services that could alleviate negative conditions and help their tribal members to thrive.

The AIPRC Final Report (1977) and the Federal Acknowledgment Regulation (1978) Set the Stage for Future Developments

After all its 11 task forces had submitted their final reports, the American Indian Policy Review Commission published its own overarching final report in 1977. The AIPRC was comprised of primarily of members of Congress and the Senate, led by Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota. Although there was representation from a non-federally recognized tribe (Adolph Dial, Lumbee) and a terminated tribe (Ada Deer, Menominee), unlike Task Force Ten, there was no representation from New England tribes (AIPRC 1977, 3). The Commission's final report covered each of the topics addressed by the various task forces that had been at work since 1975, albeit without the detail and original testimony in the task force reports. Where it addresses the challenges faced by non-federally recognized tribes, the AIPRC final report (1977) departs substantially from the recommendations made by those actually affected by the problem of non-recognition.

Whereas the AIPRC's Task Force Ten recommended the whole notion of recognition be taken out of the equation, the Commission itself held up the concept of recognition as a central element of tribes' relationship with the United States. The Commission explicitly distinguishes the American Indian case from other politics of recognition that focus on historical injustice but do not involve a concept of sovereignty.¹⁰⁶ For American Indians, the AIPRC (1977, 2) wrote, "The question goes far beyond that of 'restitution' for past wrongs," to involve the right to determine their own

¹⁰⁶ These are "politics of recognition" as political philosophers (Taylor [1992] 1994, 1994; Fraser 1996, 2001a, 2001b) and others have used the term to indicate identity-focused nationalist or separatist movements (Taylor and Gutmann 1994) [1992]).

lives, unique to the position of Indian tribes as domestic dependent nations within the United States. The Commission clearly refers to the notion of self-determination and, as the Nixon administration was doing at that time (Castile 1998), placed it at the center of the relationship between the United States and Indian tribes. This stance has clear elements in common with the later focus on the federal acknowledgment process in terms of the acknowledgment of sovereignty, as discussed in Chapter 3.

However, the final AIPRC report also clearly identified lack of access to programs and services as a major issue—even *the* major issue—facing non-federally recognized tribes. The Commission agreed nonrecognition was a problem because it served as a barrier to access to services, and this lack was a cause of worsened living conditions. The opening statement in the 1977 report’s section on non-federally recognized tribes reads:

From the viewpoint of tribes seeking to clarify their status with the Federal Government, undefined nonrecognition is an incomprehensible nonpolicy. The tribes have not been able to escape the historical circumstances and living conditions that all Indians share, but they *have been unable to obtain the services which other tribes receive.* (AIPRC 1977, 459–460, emphasis mine)¹⁰⁷

At first glance, this opening statement—in addition to its focus on services and quality of life—also seems to capture the spirit of testimony like that of Richard Hayward, quoted above. Both focus on the absurdity and injustice of nonrecognition and raise the issue of services in the same statement. However, both Hayward and Task Force Ten suggest that *recognition itself* is irrelevant and propose that the status of “recognized” itself be done

¹⁰⁷ This statement is followed up on later in the report, where the AIPRC reiterates the findings of Task Force Ten on the importance of programs and services: “Of the tribes receiving services, most get funds from a few Federal programs: CETA funds administered by the Department of Labor, Indian Education Act . . . funds administered by the U.S. Office of Education, and some ONAP programs. The most frequently expressed needs in these communities are education, health services, housing, land, and legal assistance” (AIPRC 1977, 451).

away with, except perhaps in very specific legal situations.¹⁰⁸ The Commission, on the other hand, though they agreed non-recognition was a problem, held fast to the notion that recognition is a fundamental component of Indian law, quite opposite Task Force's Ten's recommendation. They propose *non-recognition* be done away with.

The AIPRC final report embraces the *extension* of recognition, rather than its abolition, as the solution to the problems non-recognized tribes faced, including lack of programs and services, but also as a solution to the federal government's problem of not having clear determining factors for which groups should be recognized as tribes and which should not. The Commission's goal in proposing a new petitioning process was not just to solve the problems of non-recognized groups but to shore up and reaffirm their stance on the importance of recognition as a legal concept (AIPRC 1976, 460). The AIPRC emphasized that "[t]here must be a valid and consistent set of factors applied to every Indian tribal group which seeks recognition" (AIPRC 1976, 460). This idea to create a process governed by consistent criteria addressed the concerns of already-recognized tribes that illegitimate groups might gain acknowledgment (Klopotek 2011) and addressed the government's need for certainty in a way the recommendations of Task Force Ten did not.¹⁰⁹

In short, the Commission proposed *reforming* recognition through the creation of a formal petitioning process and new institutions to carry it out. The AIPRC proposed that Congress create a new office of federal acknowledgment outside the Bureau of

¹⁰⁸ Tureen, an Indian law expert, but not a Native American leader himself, suggests tribes are not opposed to limited uses of the recognition concept for particular legal purposes related to the accountability of tribes as political units (AIPRC Task Force Ten, 1662–1664).

¹⁰⁹ See Blackburn (2005) for a comparable discussion of the need for certainty in Canada regarding Indigenous rights.

Indian Affairs (BIA) and funded independently of that agency's budget. The proposed office would have two primary responsibilities. First, office staffers would work with non-federally recognized tribes on the research and petitioning process leading up to acknowledgment. Then, and at the end of the research process, that same office would evaluate the petition and make a determination about whether a given group fulfills the criteria to be recognized as an Indian tribe (AIPRC 1977, 460–464).¹¹⁰ The new office would also secure programs and services for newly recognized tribes. Because this would be done through an office outside this BIA with its own budget, securing these services for tribes that lacked access would not interfere with the budgets for services for already-acknowledged groups.

To summarize, in the AIPRC report, the constitution of the problem starts to shift but is not entirely changed; there is still a clear emphasis on programs and services. However, this emphasis began to fade away almost immediately through the evolution of the actual federal recognition process as implemented *not* through new legislation but through the federal regulation introduced in 1978. This regulation, drafted by BIA staff, created a petitioning process and office that was similar to, yet also importantly different from, the proposals of the AIPRC.

Crucial Differences Between AIRPRC Recommendations and the 1978 Regulation

Despite overarching similarities, there are crucial differences between both the spirit and details of the 1977 AIPRC recommendations and the 1978 regulation. Most apparent are the differences between the “definitional factors” proposed by the AIPRC those eventually included in C.F.R. 25 § 83 (Riley 2016, 457). The real differences

¹¹⁰ See the sections “Conclusion: Policy Notes” and “Recommendations” on pages (460-464) of the AIPRC final report (1977).

between the AIPRC's recommendations and the regulations imposed, however, are more substantial than the content of the criteria themselves.

The Commission explicitly recommended creating a new office *outside* the BIA to solicit, assist with, and evaluate petitions for recognition (AIPRC 1977, 464). This office, as described by the AIPRC, would be funded by Congress, separate from other Indian affairs budgets and would exist only for a specific period of time (ten years). It would not only be "entrusted with the responsibility of affirming tribes' relationship with the federal government," but also "empowered to direct Federal Indian programs to these tribal communities" (AIPRC 1977, 461). This office, as the AIPRC envisioned it, would focus not just on the acknowledgment procedure but also on program access for the tribes recognized through the new process.

In the details of its proposal, the AIPRC adhered closely to the Task Force Ten's focus on the problem of access to programs by suggesting how program access can be assured through the details of the office established and how it is funded in the federal budget. The 1977 report recommended that Congress allocate the funding for this office and its work separately from the budget for the BIA and Office of Native American Programs (ONAP) within the Department of Health, Welfare, and Education (HEW). This was an important detail because, had this plan been followed, provisioning services to newly recognized tribes would not impinge on the budget for services for already-recognized tribes.

However, none of these specific recommendations about the office and its budget became a part of the final regulation that came into force in 1978. Indeed, because the BIA created the regulation when they did, Congress never passed legislation on

acknowledgment. Once a form of reform had been accomplished via the new regulation, the pressure was off to take legislative action. And so, the new acknowledgment office was created within the BIA.¹¹¹ Scholars of federal recognition have long highlighted the conflict of interest between the new Branch of Acknowledgment Research (BAR) and the BIA as one of the main long-term, intractable problems with the administrative recognition process.¹¹² This one seemingly small difference has had cascading effects on the degree to which the process works with non-recognized tribes in a spirit of goodwill or the degree to which it scrutinizes them, seeking to find ways in which they do not conform to the criteria and must therefore remain unrecognized.

The AIPRC recommendations assert clearly that the burden of proof lies with the United States to prove that that the tribal groups petitioning for recognition are *not* recognizable under the definitional factors as an Indian tribal community (AIPRC 1977, 461). In the Commission's view, the solicitation and creation of well-researched petitions would be the responsibility of the newly created office, not the non-recognized tribes themselves. Importantly the description of the office's work specifies that the research carried out in order to draft the petition should be done by the new office's staff or, if completed by people designated by the tribe, paid for by the office. The AIPRC report

¹¹¹ The regulation was drafted by longtime BIA employee (Campisi and Starna 1999, 3), John "Bud" Shapard, who would later come to regret his role in instituting the new recognition regime. At a 1990 Congressional hearing he stated his opposition to the 1978 regulation quite plainly: "After fourteen years of trying to make the regulations which I drafted in 1978 work, I must conclude that they are fatally flawed and unworkable. They take too long to produce results. They are administratively too complicated. The decisions are subjective and are not necessarily accurate. The criteria are limited in scope and are not applicable to many of the petitioning groups which are, in fact, viable Indian tribes" (Shapard 1990, cited in Campisi and Starna 1999, 12). When the BAR became the OFA, it was moved out of the BIA and now reports directly to the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs.

¹¹² Miller (2004) in particular makes this argument in *Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process*, the earliest book-length historical treatment of the federal acknowledgment process and one that includes substantial oral history interviews with BIA staff in its information gathering methods.

specifies a timeframe of just a single year for the office to make a decision about the tribe's eligibility.

Here, too, there are important differences between how the research would be funded and conducted as outlined by the AIPRC and the actual specifics of the final 1978 regulation. As established in 1978, the process did not explicitly make the funding of petition research a responsibility of the government.¹¹³ The unfunded mandate of the Bureau of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR) deepened the conflict of interest between the BIA and non-federally recognized tribes; any funds dedicated to working with non-federally recognized tribes toward acknowledgment would come out of existing BIA budgets. They would, in a way, be taken away from already-acknowledged tribes and the budget for federal programs and services to support them and address their challenges. The way the BAR was created as an unfunded office within the BIA reflects problems highlighted decades earlier in the AICC's *Declaration*, where the lack of consistent funding for Indians, free from a built-in time horizon, was highlighted as one of the major challenges Indians faced in working with government (American Indian Chicago Conference 1961, 10 –11).

The particular details of the federal acknowledgment regulation, which are so striking in comparison to the AIPRC recommendation, are important to understand because they shaped the experiences of non-federally recognized tribes who decided to make a bid for recognition through the BAR and its new process. Nipmuc Nation is

¹¹³ The lack of clear funding to accompany the new regulation was a result of the way it was created through a regulation by an agency, not through Congress, where designated funds could have been approved along with the introduction of the new office and its mandate. Although in early years, some tribes did receive grants to fund acknowledgment research (Grabowski 1994, interview with author 2018; Greenbaum 1985), these came from an entirely different federal agency, outside of the BIA.

among the many tribes who share this experience. However, I argue in this chapter, that the details of the regulation alone cannot explain why non-federally recognized tribes who had opposed recognition as a policy as recently as 1976 engaged with the new federal acknowledgment process after 1978. That engagement, over the course of decades, created the national-scale speech chain network, within which, over the course of decades, the predominant understanding of recognition shifted away from the earlier association between recognition and programs/services and toward its current connections to identity and sovereignty.

Below, I examine why groups once understood recognition as important because it mediated access to programs and services eventually came to understand recognition quite differently—in terms of sovereignty and identity. Alone, the regulation could not have affected a wholesale change in non-federally recognized tribes’ orientations to recognition; however, in combination with national-scale changes in the political and economic context in which the events of the late 1970s and early 1980s played out, the meaning of recognition to non-federally recognized tribes was eventually transformed in the direction of the federal legal notion of recognition that many non-federally recognized Indians had resisted in 1976.

I begin by introducing the broader context of policy and political developments of the 1980s. I examine how a major shift in non-federally recognized tribes’ orientations to recognition took place at the same time that other sorts of programs and services for Indians—which had existed under the DOL, HEW, and other agencies, during the 1970s—were defunded and dramatically reduced in scale and scope during the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s. Then I apply this information to contextualize early Nipmuc

motivations for engaging with federal programs related to acknowledgment during the 1980s. I return to the interviews I conducted in 2018 to illuminate the motives for engaging with the federal apparatus dedicated to the acknowledgment of non-federally recognized tribes through the memories of one individual involved in a federally funded status clarification project in the 1980s.

After 1978: As the Route to Recognition Clarified, Other Possibilities Faded

Why did non-federally recognized Indians who had been skeptical of recognition in the Task Force Ten report begin to embrace it within just a few short years? 1978 served as an important milestone in the scholarly literature on federal recognition because it represents a major development in avenues to administrative recognition. However, this historical moment and the years immediately afterward featured other important changes in Indian affairs. The embrace of the federal acknowledgment process by non-federally recognized groups played out in the context of these other changes, in society, and in federal Indian policy. The defunding and dissolution of those programs that had not been linked to federally recognized status helped to shepherd non-federally recognized groups into the new administrative federal acknowledgment process, despite the red flags about how that process would work and which were evident from the start in the gaps between the 1977 AIRPC recommendations and the 1978 regulation as it was implemented.

Loss of Access to Self-Administered Programs: The Case of CETA

While the Branch of Acknowledgment Research (BAR) enjoyed a honeymoon period during the early 1980s (Miller 2004, 43–45), the programs that non-federally recognized tribes had relied on to meet their communities' needs in the mid-1970s were

being actively dismantled in the late 1970s and into the 1980s. The CETA, which was mentioned so explicitly by leaders of New England tribes in the 1976 Task Force Ten report and in the AIPRC report (AIPRC 1977, 448–456), makes for an excellent, concrete example of the overall trend.

Back in 1975–1976 when Task Force Ten was underway, CETA was a popular program, and not just among Indians, as evidenced in the Task Force Ten report; positive attitudes toward CETA were common across the country and among local government officials. By 1978, as CETA came up for re-authorization, however, both public and political support for the program started to waver. CETA's results were noticeable but the amount the federal government was paying for a relatively modest impact on unemployment was very high (Congressional Budget Office 1978). At the same time, stories in the press increasingly alleged corruption by local officials who controlled the administration of CETA public service employment jobs (Bennet 1978; Smothers 1978).¹¹⁴

In 1978, President Carter substantially cut CETA's budget and redirected the program to focus its efforts on unemployment among the very most disenfranchised, rather than on unemployment in general. As the program began to shrink in size and took on a goal clearly linked to a limited welfare mission, rather than broad impact on the economy.¹¹⁵ As a result, CETA lost the faith of the general public moving into the 1980s.

¹¹⁴ It is important to note that the allegations of widespread corruption in CETA are understood by scholars of the program to have been exaggerated. There were certainly instances of inappropriate use of funds and mismanagement, but these were relatively few (Weir 1992, 128).

¹¹⁵ See also Mucciaroni's (1990) *Employment Policy and Liberal Failure* on how the use of training and employment ("manpower") programs as social welfare measures rather than as a part of broader economic policy restricted the effectiveness and the level of support for these programs, as much in the Kennedy administration as during the Nixon, Johnson, and Carter presidencies. Mucciaroni's study will be especially interesting to the reader of this dissertation for his comparison between this state of affairs and the Swedish use of manpower programs as a part of a broader, constructive economic policy for adapting to change (see

In many ways, CETA's demise dovetailed with the decline of postwar liberal optimism, a stance that asserted that government could make positive change in social and economic conditions by taking bold and direct action on the problems of the time (Mucciaroni 1990). In its place, Americans were increasingly committed to the notion that limiting taxes and limiting government intervention was a better, more realistic approach.

CETA fell from being a well-liked program that both depended on and instilled optimism about the role of the state in managing social and economic problems to one of its time's chief examples of government corruption and ineptitude (even though the scale of corruption in the program was widely exaggerated by its detractors [Weir 1992, 126–128]). CETA's demise, beginning in 1978, marks a transition away from the liberal optimism of the post-war period, when the public expected and demanded ambitious plans for the government's role in solving America's social and economic problems. This shift, already underway in the late 1970s, set the stage for the success of Reagan's message that government should step aside and allow the private sector to lead the nation into prosperity.¹¹⁶

Chapter 9). One can easily extrapolate from this comparative analysis about some of the differences between US economic policy and Norwegian economic policy post-war, as discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

¹¹⁶ Some attitudes, and even quotations, later attributed to Ronald Reagan and today widely associated with the 1980s actually began to appear in the mid-1970s. For instance, the quote "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help," is most often associated with Reagan's words in an August 1986 news conference (Ronald Reagan 1986). Reagan did indeed say these words and became well-known for the quip, but he was actually citing a trope already at least ten years old. Senator Edmund D. Muskie, a Democrat from Maine, said something very similar in July 1976, at the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Chicago, claiming "I'm from the federal government and I'm here to help you" (quoted in Shapiro 2006, 825). Muskie seems to have been building on an earlier saying, cited as early as 1941: "The American condition can be summed up in three sentences we're hearing these days: 'Your check is in the mail.' 'I will respect you as much in the morning.' 'I am from the government and I am here to help you'" (quoted in Shapiro 2006, 825). Despite the sentiment's earlier origins, the fact that Muskie uttered this phrase, with the addition of the word "federal," at a meeting of city mayors during the height of CETA spending ties the phrase directly to the links between even a "devolved" program like CETA and a growing anti-government narrative, across party lines, in the late 1970s.

Even after Carter scaled the program back in 1979 and 1980, over 10,000 reservation Indians, plus an unknown number of off-reservation and non-federally recognized Indians, were still working in public service employment jobs through CETA (Morris 1988, 734). When Reagan's cuts to the program made it through Congress in 1982, they had immediate impacts in Indian country. Between 1980 and 1982, overall unemployment on reservations (where the numbers are clearest) jumped from 40% to 80%. In some cases, unemployment rates effectively doubled in under a single year.¹¹⁷

For non-federally recognized Indians, the significance of CETA cutbacks was two-fold. Not only was there the problem of increased unemployment, as Native leaders from New England described in the Task Force Ten Boston Hearing (AIPRC Task Force Ten 1976), there was also the fact that running their own non-profits as CETA prime sponsors had been the only path available to non-federally recognized Indians seeking to self-administer their federally funded programs and services. Thus, CETA's demise, beginning in 1978, and accelerating substantially by 1982, further narrowed the possibilities for non-recognized tribes to run their own programs without first obtaining federally recognized status. As I have established in this chapter and the last, gaining programs and services was a primary motivator for non-federally recognized tribes' engagements with government, so the decline of CETA likely contributed to an increasingly willingness to engage with the new federal acknowledgment process, which happened to come into existence just as just options through CETA began to become less reliable than ever.

¹¹⁷ Cook (1996) cites a mention in Deck et al. (1982, 49) of the rate on the Navajo Nation jumping from 38% to 75%.

Reagan Administration Tightened Eligibility Requirements to Reduce Costs

At the same time CETA was reduced and eroded, the Reagan administration sought to subject Indian programs to its program of drastic budget cuts. When, in 1982, the Democratic-controlled Congress blocked the deep cuts to Indian programs proposed in the Reagan budget, the Reagan administration, undeterred, approached their goal through executive influence at the agencies instead. Under Reagan, the BIA changed its rules and regulations governing eligibility for Indian programs. The blood quantum requirements still in use became more restrictive, and where Indian descent had been sufficient before, programs were made accessible only to those Indians affiliated with federally recognized tribes. Where federally recognized tribes were concerned, the Reagan administration urged tribes to create their own tribal enterprises and fund their own programs and services through these revenues rather than relying on federal budgets to fund programs and services on reservations (Cook 1996).¹¹⁸

By the end of the 1980s, recognized tribes had the option to pursue entrepreneurial ventures to fund their own programs, but these opportunities were not available to non-federally recognized tribes, whose members were treated as any other individuals, not as a group or a corporate entity.¹¹⁹ The programs and services that had been available to individuals of Indian descent during midcentury no longer existed to the degree that they had even as recently as 1975. In addition to such programs in HEW and ONAP, through CETA there had been a way to for non-recognized Indians to self-

¹¹⁸ This changed toward entrepreneurialism and a limited role for the public section was a notable shift from the mid-century logics about development and the role of the state that the AICC had engaged with in 1961.

¹¹⁹ See Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) on this shift at the global scale as a result of the rise of neoliberalism and corporatism in US tribal politics in the 1970s and forward.

administer federal programs specifically for Indians: the Indian manpower programs. By the early 1980s, that option was gone, at precisely the moment that eligibility for other federal programs under the BIA was being restricted by a Reagan administration determined to cut spending on Indian programs and services. Along with increased restrictions on qualification for BIA programs, CETA's demise was a contributing factor in funneling "so-called unrecognized Indians" (AIPRC 1977, 41), many of whom rejected the whole notion of recognition as recently as 1976, into the federal acknowledgment process after 1978.

From 1961 through 1976, access to programs and services was a central motivation of non-recognized tribes engaging with government. By 1981, the few routes to that goal that had been open to non-recognized groups as late as 1976 were already disappearing, not only within freestanding Indian programs but through cuts to broader initiatives, like CETA, that had earmarked Indians as a special target population. Moving into the 1980s, non-federally recognized Indians' attention turned increasingly toward recognition. This was not only because a clearer path to acknowledgment had been formalized in 1978, but also because the programs and services non-federally recognized Indians had long sought to access were increasingly tied to federal recognition where they still existed at all.

Federally Funded Acknowledgment Work as a Means to Pursue Other Programs and Priorities

During the 1980s, as many sources of federal funding that New England Indians had utilized and managed on behalf of struggling members of their communities were

being rolled back, new funds became available to them. However, unlike the earlier funds, which were available for specific social and economic problems like unemployment, these new funds were available only to non-federally recognized tribes undertaking acknowledgment work in preparation for seeking federal recognition.

The need for these grants arose from the differences between the 1977 AIPRC recommendations for a new office of federal acknowledgment and the way the early Federal Acknowledgment Project (FAP) at the BIA was established through the 1978 regulation. Because acknowledgment work was *not* funded through the creation of the office, which was accomplished through a regulation and not a law with a Congressionally authorized budget allocation, funds for acknowledgment work had to come from a different source. By the mid-1980s, such grants were available from other agencies of the federal government, outside the BIA. The Administration for Native Americans (ANA), the successor to the Office of Native American Programs (ONAP), itself the successor to the War on Poverty era Indian Desk, which had long included non-federally recognized tribes in its constituency, made available “status clarification” grants.¹²⁰ During the 1980s, non-federally recognized Indians could apply for these funds to support the research and documentation efforts needed to produce a successful petition document (Greenbaum 1985).

Nipmucs in Massachusetts were among those that applied for and received a status clarification grant from the ANA. These monies funded the Nipmuc Tribal

¹²⁰ The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) in DHHS is the successor, after several changes of form, to the Johnson Indian Community Action program, a legacy still highlighted in the office’s narrative on its “About” page online (Administration for Native Americans 2021) and mentioned in Cobb (2008, 201). On status clarification grants, see Federal Acknowledgment Administrative Procedures Act of 1989: Hearing Before the Select Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, One Hundred First Congress, First Session, on S. 611, to Establish Administrative Procedures to Determine the Status of Certain Indian Groups on status clarification grants.

Acknowledgment Project (NTAP) in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Notably, Thomas Doughton, whom I interviewed in 2018 and who was personally involved in NTAP, described the origins of the project:

. . . at the time, the project [at the ANA] was directed by Lucille Dawson, who was a Narraganset from Rhode Island. She knew who we were, and I can remember Ms. Dawson saying, quite specifically, “Say, you’re going to do all this in order to make an application for federal recognition and we can fund you. If you never make the application, so be it. But if you claim that this is part of a uniform reorganization of your people, then the Administration for Native Americans can fund you.” So, we had gotten a small grant for a status clarification project, which was for \$50,000. Uh, the next year we got \$165,000 grant to, you know, begin undertaking some of these activities. Then we were in line for three years of funding at almost \$400,000 a year for three years. Now that was for *a whole series of different kinds of programs* . . . (Doughton 2018, interview, emphasis mine)

Two things are particularly notable here. First, this story demonstrates a clear role for the network among Native Americans from different tribal backgrounds at the regional level in New England, even in the context of a program like the status clarification program that focused on the level of the individual tribe. This regional interconnection falls outside of how acknowledgment is framed in the regulation, but it is an important element of New England tribes’ recognition histories.

Secondly, Doughton’s story seems to represent an occasion on which, even in the late 1980s, recognition work was still being approached as an opportunity to create programs, an orientation that aligns closely with the earlier motivations for seeking recognition that characterized the 1960s and early 1970s, as per the documents produced by the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC) in 1961 and the final report of Task Force Ten in 1976, rather than the understanding of recognition in the later 1977 AIPRC final report or the 1978 federal regulation, which aligns more closely with the focus on sovereignty. The way the initial grant could fund program administration work, much the

way CETA funds had in the 1970s, is a clear feature of how Doughton's described the program in 2018.

Though NTAP did take some steps to assemble a list of individuals "of Nipmuc heritage" to look into seeking Congressional (rather than administrative) recognition, according to Doughton these were not the project's only goals (Doughton 2014; Doughton 2018, interview with author). In his description of NTAP's successes, Doughton explicitly noted that work on acknowledgment was only *one part* of "a whole series of different kinds of programs" that NTAP created. Elsewhere in the interview, Doughton described the NTAP efforts as operating on a shoestring, only able to make calls in the evening because they were borrowing a phone line from neighboring businesses at the office in the old downtown mall in Worcester.

In Doughton's telling, those heading up NTAP would not have been able to undertake these other Nipmuc-led projects without the ANA status clarification grant. ANA funding gave non-federally recognized tribes the opportunity to administer their own programs in the 1980s, in much the way that CETA had the 1970s. As the robustness of programs and services *not* tied to recognition waned, recognition itself became more central in Indian affairs. In the late 1980s, federally recognized tribes were creating their own programs through contracting practices at the BIA. These programs were not available to non-federally recognized tribes, but such tribes could create their own programs, to a limited extent, through status clarification grants, provided that they were actively pursuing recognition. That fact that they did so shows how non-federally recognized tribes adapted to changing policies and programs to try to achieve goals that had long animated their political work.

Coda: Recognition after the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA)

In the Nipmuc recognition history, the Nipmuc Tribal Acknowledgment Project (NTAP) effort became a part of the Nipmuc Nation effort in the early 1990s. Most of my interviewees who were involved in recognition work at that stage—what one called the “third phase” of recognition work—thought about recognition in terms of identity and sovereignty, not in terms of programs and services (as discussed in Chapter 3). The events enabled by the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988 had served to make recognition a topic of greater importance to the economic situation of tribes. Moving into the 1990s, this was especially the case in New England, where the earliest tribal gaming operations transformed the economic circumstances of first the Mashantucket Pequots and later the Mohegans (Cramer 2005).

By the time of the “third phase” of recognition work among Nipmucs, which used funding from investors from the tribal gaming sector, many investors and tribal leaders thought of attaining recognition as a matter of savvy navigation of the administrative acknowledgment process. Other priorities would be dealt with once recognition was in hand (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author). Doughton (2018, interview with the author) paraphrased what he saw as the prevailing attitude among Nipmucs by the mid-1990s, “Once we get recognized, we’ll have everything. We’ll be as rich as the Mashantuckets. We don’t need to worry about programs all. You will all be getting annual checks.” From the perspective of the present, he could only laughingly add, “Right?” That was not how it worked out in the long run. Yet, this certainty about the importance of recognition, how it might make unnecessary other, older priorities

demonstrates a shift in the understanding of recognition's role for the Nipmuc community, a shift that came about as the context for recognition changed through other developments at the regional and national scale. Recollections from several of the people I interviewed in fall 2018 concurred about the degree of optimism around the federal recognition petitioning process among those involved in the 1990s.

However, on the national scale, by the mid-1990s, criticism of the federal acknowledgment process was mounting from multiple directions: among federally recognized tribes, non-federally recognized tribes still in the petitioning process, experts involved in recognition work, and even former staffers at the BAR (Campisi and Starna 1999,). By the mid-1990s, scholars and legal professionals who had once enthusiastically participated in the process were speaking up with their critiques, both in the scholarly literature (e.g. Campisi and Starna 1999) and Congressional hearings.¹²¹ The process was far too slow. Tribes had now been petitioning for recognition for over a decade, a very notable departure from the original recommendation in the AIPRC report in 1977, which had suggested the new office for federal acknowledgment be a temporary one to process *all* petitions from *all* non-federally recognized tribes within a specific period, such as ten years (AIPRC 1977, 461). The office fell under a backlog almost immediately (Riley 2016, 462) and never caught up.

¹²¹ Federal Recognition Administrative Procedures Act: hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, 104th Congress, first session, on S. 479 to provide for administrative procedures to extend federal recognition to certain Indian groups, July 13, 1995, Washington, DC Hearing on H.R. 2837 Before the H. Comm. on Natural Res., 110th Cong. 2007. By the late 1990s, Jack Campisi and Bill Starna (1999), an anthropologist and a historian who worked on many recognition petitions in New England, including the Nipmuc Nation petition, wrote a scathing critique of the federal acknowledgment process. In addition to the slowness of the BAR, they pointed to the way the regulation, as written, was supposed to follow professional standards in the fields of genealogy, history, and anthropology, and yet BAR staff did not follow the latest advances in the field. Instead they cited the precedents established in BAR's own review of petitions over the years, which hearkened back to much earlier professional standards, rather than reflecting current disciplinary knowledge.

Moving into the 2000s, those who had engaged with the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA), as the BAR was called by then, pointed out that not only was the process slow, the burden of proof the BIA required from petitioning tribes seemed to be increasing as the years wore on. James Keedy, a long-time employee of Michigan Indian Legal Services and its director during a Congressional hearing in 2007, recounted the changes in the federal acknowledgment process over time. One Michigan tribe he had worked with submitted their materials in 1978, and at that time “[a]ll the petition documents fit into a one-inch binder.” By the 1990s and 2000s, not only were the documents far more extensive, but the Office of Federal Acknowledgment’s backlog was so severe that a case begun in 1994 could not expect to receive review before 15–20 years’ time (Keedy 2007, 2–3).

Writing in 2007, Keedy pointed to how recognition had become the *only* route by which not-yet-recognized tribes could hope to ensure a measure of stability and access to resources for their communities. Rightly, he pointed to the economic and political climate as the context in which this impossibility arose. By 2007, the country was on the verge of an economic crisis bred in part by the embrace of neoliberalism across the mainstream political spectrum of the two major parties (Harvey 2007; Beder 2008; Patomäki 2009). The era of postwar liberal optimism was well in the past, and as-yet-unrecognized tribes could only hope for acknowledgment through what so many, by that point, agreed was a highly flawed system. For groups like Nipmuc Nation, that had received a negative final determination after decades of effort, the situation was even worse. They were left to appeal the determination in federal court, another struggle that would continue for more than a decade.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a look at the evolution of the circumstances around Native Americans' advocacy for recognition, state solutions purporting to address the problems non-federally recognized tribes had highlighted, and non-federally recognized groups' efforts to pursue their own priorities as the political landscape changed around them. Ultimately, this chapter follows up on the point established in Chapter 3: local understandings of recognition among particular non-federally recognized tribes are and long have been meaningfully tied to the national scale. What this chapter adds to the picture is evidence that the transformation of the meaning of recognition was tied importantly to bigger political shifts—across federal-level politics, extending well beyond Indian Affairs—that characterized the period 1960 to 1990, during which many non-federally recognized groups, including Nipmucs, were continuously engaged in political projects around their non-federally recognized status.

Particular concepts, like recognition, do not necessarily have a fixed meaning over time. Anthropologists working in a semiotic tradition shift the typical perspective to view any particular semiotic encounter, in which a concept like recognition is used or discussed, as just one moment in a much longer historical chain of such semiotic encounters. Through these historical processes, the meanings of particular sign-forms, including lexemes like the “recognition,” the focal example here, are often altered through their circulation (Agha 2007). When they are taken up in new contexts, even concepts that have been naturalized are opened to change.

I think there is a good argument that the notion that recognition was about access to programs and services naturalized among those engaged in the early decades of the national recognition movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Even from the limited sources I have included in this chapter, it is clear that this understanding clearly persisted over a timescale of decades. However, ultimately, as we have seen in Chapter 3, it was displaced at some point by the idea that recognition was not primarily about programs and services but instead about identity and sovereignty. In this chapter, I have attempted to outline how that shift was not accomplished in any single communicative act. There was no metadiscursive moment where the term recognition was definitively redefined. Even the introduction of the 1978 regulation, which helped set the stage for the transformation, did not amount to such a singular moment. Instead, I argue the meaning of recognition changed over the decades following 1978 not only due to the creation of a new policy space around acknowledgment (and offices and programs to go with it), but also because of larger shifts in the landscape of federal programs and services available to Native Americans.

The notion that recognition was important in terms of programs and services was not able to withstand changes to the actual real-world conditions that it referred to. When so many programs and services utilized by Native American were restricted during the 1980s, it should not be surprising that a discourse on recognition centered on programs and services was not fully intelligible or compelling to a younger generation of Native Americans engaging with federal acknowledgment in the 1990s and forward. Even scholars writing on recognition from the 1990s onward tend to focus on these associations rather than the earlier link to programs and services that predominated in the

1960s and 1970s. The notion that recognized status should be the key to self-determination, first elaborated by the federal government during the Nixon administration (Castile 1998), was eventually taken up by non-federally recognized tribes in their own understandings of recognition. This shift demonstrates that extent to which the government, which controls so many of the entailments of recognition (the policies and outcomes to which recognized status is linked) can influence the very meanings of recognition. Groups seeking political forms of acknowledgment, by engaging with the state, submit themselves to these terms, although, as we saw in the closing story from Doughton's (2018) interview, not always without resisting how the state has sought to change the very terms of engagement.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I laid out how Nipmuc understandings of recognition were meaningfully linked to the national scale and how these meanings have changed over time, in part through changes to Native Americans' real possibilities for accessing programs and services. I have demonstrated how larger shifts in politics, in this case away from a post-war liberal universalism and into neoliberalism, can have marked effects within a more constrained space of political discourse and action, like the negotiation of government recognition of Indigenous people. In Chapter 5, I turn from the shared task of Chapters 3 and 4—contextualizing the Nipmuc case—back to the particulars of the Nipmuc story. I examine how Nipmuc interviewees recall and understand their own experiences of recognition during and as a result of the ““third phase”” of recognition work in their community and the efforts undertaken by Nipmuc Nation beginning in the 1990s.

CHAPTER 5

NIPMUC EXPERIENCES OF RECOGNITION: NAVIGATING ASSUMPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

In Chapter 3, I mapped out the multiple meanings of recognition to my Nipmuc interlocutors and demonstrated how these are linked to national-scale discourse on the situation of non-federally recognized tribes. In Chapter 4, I expanded on this analysis by demonstrating how the transformation of the predominant meaning of recognition at this national scale was achieved through changes to the position and entailments of recognition within United States Indian policy as well as through federal authorities' metasemiotic discourse, reanalyzing and refining the meaning of recognition in legal terms. In this present chapter I present an analysis of my Nipmuc interlocutors' experiences of recognition related to the "third phase" of the community's recognition struggle, Nipmuc Nation's efforts to secure recognition through the federal acknowledgment process, beginning in the 1990s. Here, I present an analysis of my Nipmuc interlocutors' memories and understandings of their experiences of the recognition work and its outcomes. The set of interviews includes a variety of perspectives on the recognition work, from those who were centrally involved in the everyday bureaucratic and research labor to those who were not personally involved but were affected by it.

Overall, the interviews I analyze in this chapter focused overwhelmingly on the context of the federal acknowledgment process administered through the BIA and how it was pursued by Nipmuc Nation in the 1990s and early 2000s. Other everyday

experiences of recognition or nonrecognition of identity, outside the context of the federal acknowledgment, played a lesser role in the interviews. However, the foundations of social recognizability—widely circulating models of personhood and identity—are closely linked to the reasons why Nipmucs pursued recognition, in the sense that recognition of tribal status would serve for many as an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of their Native identities. The ways Nipmuc identities defy the racial paradigm that shapes social and political life in the US empire-state often result in illegibility and misrecognition when racial modes of perception are employed to make determinations of identity that do not match up with Nipmuc understandings of themselves and their community.

The whole concept of the administrative federal acknowledgment process, and the notion of state forms of recognition in general, centers on “final determinations” of fact that will stand forever. Topics like specific subjects of the federal acknowledgment criteria, like community, membership, and political authority, are treated as final or static when evaluated in the research for a petition. Yet, as domains of ongoing social life, community, leadership, and belonging also important elements of the real in-the-moment work required to submit a petition to the BIA. Even as the federal regulation offers a way to reach a final, authorized determination about a group’s status, the domains of social and political life reflected in the criteria remain the subject of constant, active negotiation among tribal members executing and effected by the pursuit of acknowledgment.

In analyzing the full set of interviews, I was struck by the extent to which experiences of recognition were characterized as positive or negative primarily in terms of their effects on relationships. Whether an individual interviewee supported the

recognition work, on one end of the spectrum, or saw it as “doomed from the start,” on the other end, relationships were important to their feelings about recognition. Whether experiences and outcomes of recognition were understood as positive or negative had everything to do with their perceived impact on how people related to one another. Establishing this consistent thread across the interviews forms a first level of the analysis in this chapter.

On a second level, interviewees’ reflections on recognition reveal gaps between Nipmuc conceptions of community, belonging, and leadership and contrasting underlying expectations and assumptions at the heart of the federal acknowledgment process, as administered by the BIA. These contrasts are rooted in different ideas about how to relate to others. Where the ideas embraced in the federal acknowledgment regulation emphasize fixity and hierarchy, the notions of community, belonging, and leadership that my Nipmuc interlocutors related to me emphasize relationships between people and respect for autonomy. Those understandings make it difficult to translate Nipmuc understandings of their own community and its history into the terms of the federal acknowledgment regulation in ways that will be effective for the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) as readers and evaluators of the petition document.

Outline of the Chapter

This chapter is organized in three sections, all of which center on elements of Nipmuc experiences of social and political recognition. The first two sections focus on experiences of the federal acknowledgment process specifically, while the third puts that

in dialog with the dynamics of social recognition (and non-recognition) of Nipmuc identities in US society more generally

I begin with a first section focused on community, membership, and belonging. There, I outline the ways that Nipmuc understandings of their own community, while not at odds with the text of the regulation, proved to be incompatible with the way the regulation has been interpreted by OFA. I consider how those involved in the recognition work had to navigate the federal criteria to delimit the tribe's membership according to formal rules that were at odds with the sense of community and belonging that animated Nipmuc social life during acknowledgment work of the 1990s. I put this discussion into dialog with Simpson's (2014) concepts of feeling citizenship as a mode of belonging to an Indigenous polity that is distinct from membership rules.

In a second section, "Leadership and Relationship," I address the ways in which the kinds of leadership needed to undertake the administrative recognition petitioning process was experienced by some as at odds with their own values around leadership, which they understood to be an element of their community's values. I conclude that section with a consideration of how the notion of political authority mobilized in the federal acknowledgment process reflects the form of authority that exists in a state system but all but guarantees that other forms of political authority important to Indigenous communities become illegible to the government employees who evaluate petition documents.

Having established how recognition and its requirements presented such a terrain of discord for the tribe, in a third and final section, I consider why some tribal members may have been attracted to a legal form of recognition tied to expert standards of

evaluation. I demonstrate how the commitment to certain ideas that were a part of the acknowledgment process persisted in the way interviewees talked about community and belonging in 2018 and then I explain the appeal of these standards as a powerful register of articulating belonging, backed by expert knowledge and clear forms of evidence. The historical and genealogical methods for establishing membership that the BIA encouraged tribes to take up did cause hurt feelings and disrupt the sense of community among Nipmucs. However, they also seemed to provide a way to contextualize hegemonic racialized readings of identity that were already problematic for Nipmuc people and were all but unavoidable in interactions with both other Native American communities and the wider public, locally, regionally, and nationally. Ultimately, this final section underlines the reality that the federal acknowledgment process actively impacts the way people relate to one another as a result of their engagement with the process. It is not just a neutral mechanism for evaluating tribal members' relationship to one another; it also affects those relationships and the means by which connection is reckoned and understood. Even as the US federal acknowledgment criteria are explicitly based on expert determinations of identity, not widespread social models, they exist and are applied in the context of overdetermining racial ontologies.

Community, Membership, and Belonging

As outlined above, the existence of an "Indian entity," a distinct and continuous community, and a membership that is acceptable to the BIA in terms of its involvement in the community and its members' genealogies are dealt with in separate criteria in the federal acknowledgment regulation (25 CFR § 83.7, criteria a, b, e, and f). The division

of these features of the tribal formation into explicit criteria belies their interrelationship. For Nipmuc Nation, the criteria of Indian entity (a), community (b), and membership (e), by which they were judged unable to fulfill the federal standards, are all closely related. In each of these domains, interviewees recalled a disjuncture between their own understanding of their community and the standards of the federal acknowledgment regulation.

Criteria Evaluating the Collective Dimension: Indian Entity, Community

The Nipmuc individuals with whom I spoke in fall 2018 pointed out that that Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA)'s determination that Nipmuc Nation could not demonstrate their continued existence as a community was linked to the OFA's stance that Nipmucs were not historically recognizable a single community. Nipmucs' understandings of their relationships to one another were not mirrored in government or scholarly frameworks. Outsiders had tended to construct their narratives in terms of a variety of geographical centers—most of them former Praying Towns—and to equate those with the existence of discrete bands of Nipmuc Indians. Indeed, as a legacy of the Praying Town project, many of these groups were named after particular places and administered separately by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (monikers like Hassanamisco band and Dudley-Webster band emerged from this history). Contrary to the state's understanding of these Nipmuc bands as legitimate, smaller, and more geographically constrained units of the Nipmuc community, Nipmucs approached the task of federal acknowledgment seeking to bring all Nipmuc people together and submit a single petition that would reflect the community as a tribe. In OFA's evaluation of their

petition, Nipmuc Nation ran up against the notion that the individual administrative labels that the state of Massachusetts had used were the relevant “Indian entities” in question. So, rather than thinking in terms of Nipmuc Nation, the evaluators of the petition often referred to individual bands: Hassanamisco, Dudley-Webster, and so on (US DOI 2004).

This logic carried over even more powerfully into the evaluation of the community criterion. “Community” can mean many things. Most anthropological understandings of community emphasize the unique ways of reckoning belonging that particular communities mobilize. The foundations of these can be quite different depending on context.¹²² As the OFA’s approach to evaluating petitions solidified over time, community became interpreted in terms of a central place where tribal members lived. Recognition researchers I interviewed pointed to that pattern (Grabowski 2018, interview with author) with the interpretation of community in terms of place being a continuous pattern in federal administration of Indian affairs since the Cohen criteria of the 1940s (Cohen 2012 [1942]).

For Nipmucs, the OFA’s focus on a single place was unfortunate because it did not match their understanding of community and belonging. They found themselves continually evaluated in terms of the ability to match individual tribal members with fixed locations, particularly the former Praying Towns, where Nipmuc families had owned land in the 17th and 18th centuries.¹²³ Even the preliminary positive determination Nipmuc Nation received in 2001 was based largely on the links between tribal members and the single site of Hassanamesit (in Grafton, MA). The wider Nipmuc community as

¹²² See, for instance, Ramirez (2007) for a treatment of community and belonging among urban Indians, which provides a clear counter to the assumptions that animate BIA determinations of community as discussed here.

¹²³ See O’Brien (2003) and Mandell (1996) on the history of dispossession of lands in the Praying Towns.

Nipmuc Nation understood it was seemingly unintelligible to the federal acknowledgment office (DOI 2001; Holley interview 2018). Cheryll Holley, who was head of the Nipmuc Nation traditional government (*sonksq*) at the time of the interviews I conducted in 2018, had been involved in the federal acknowledgment work of the 1990s. In her description of the Nipmuc experience of the federal acknowledgment process, Holley emphasized the way that OFA's expectations about a one-to-one link between people and a single place did not fit with Nipmuc understandings of community:

. . . we're not like that. We've never, ever, ever been like that . . . Even our history – So – So, you know, the, um, praying towns, Hassanamisco, and Natick – And even, um, Chaubunagungamaug was a – a newer praying town, but the . . . Pegans that lived over here and Chaubunagungamaug owned land over here in Natick, and the Hassanamesits owned land over in Natick, but they're clearly Hassanamesit. These people are clearly Pegan. Their last name's Pegan. But they're owning land in Natick, because in Nipmuc culture, it doesn't matter which place you're at. You're still you. . . Everybody's married to each other. It's still Nipmuc country. You're still in your place. (Holley 2018, interview with the author)

For Nipmucs, movement on the landscape and links among families and places were not a problem; they didn't matter to determinations of who a person was—in fact they were expected and accepted as a normal part of life as a Nipmuc person.¹²⁴ “But,” Holley pointed out, a concrete link between one people (one “Indian entity”) and one discrete place, “it mattered for them, it mattered for the BIA.”

The expectations of the OFA, which drew on a definition of community that traces back to the Cohen criteria or earlier, were at odds with Nipmuc understandings of community, even as they aligned with how the Commonwealth of Massachusetts had

¹²⁴ The idea of connections to a wide kin network across the region is also emphasized in a number of historical studies of much earlier periods in New England history, including Brooks (2008, 2018), Cohen (2010), Delucia (2018), Gould (2010), Gould et al. (2020), Herbster (2020, 95), and H. Pezzarossi (2020) among others.

administered Nipmuc bands in terms of groups of people tied to particular places through the history of proprietorship. Recent historical scholarship emphasizes how Praying Towns serve as places of containment with containment serving as a key strategy of colonial domination in the northeast (Brooks 2018, 175). Where Nipmucs and other Indigenous people of the northeast thwarted these strategies and maintained relationships across a larger homeland, one effect of their successful resistance was, ironically, the eventual illegibility of their communities as communities in the federal acknowledgment process. In the final determination, that illegibility translated into ineligibility for federally recognized status.

Membership

Nipmuc Nation's response to this disjuncture between their own understandings and the expectations of the federal acknowledgment office was to try to accommodate their presentation of themselves to the standards embraced by federal authorities. This influenced how they wrote about their history as a group in the petition. However, the creation of membership lists and tribal enrollment criteria to govern membership was the area in which outside standards created the most lived discord among those carrying out the recognition work and the wider Nipmuc community. These negotiations became a locus for disagreements and negative experiences as tribal members working on the tribe's genealogy committee, tribal council, or recognition research team were persuaded to apply outside standards to the family histories of members of their own communities, in ways they never would have done were it not for their engagement in the federal acknowledgment process.

Although the federal acknowledgment process aims to evaluate tribes as entities, rather than applying its criteria to individuals (as in the Norwegian Sami Act, for a contrasting example), many of the criteria are evaluated in terms of the individuals on the tribal roll that the petitioning group submits as an element of their petition. For this reason, membership becomes a topic of central concern not only in terms of genealogy but also in terms of community and political involvement. In this chapter, I focus extensively on Nipmuc experiences related to the Nipmuc Nation effort to present a membership list that could satisfy the demands of the BIA's federal acknowledgment office. These experiences were the ones my interviewees spoke about at greatest length. According to both recognition research professionals and Nipmuc interviewees, a substantial portion of the recognition effort was focused on documentation of individuals' genealogies and historical involvement in the tribe both for the purposes of fulfilling the criteria related overtly to membership and also to demonstrate fulfillment of the criteria on which the tribe, as a collectivity, would be evaluated.

Membership and Experiences of the Administrative Federal Acknowledgment Process

When Nipmuc Nation received initial comments on their submitted petition document from the Branch of Acknowledgment Research (BAR) in the mid-1990s, they were informed that one of the problems with their petition was their membership list (US DOI 2004; Holley interview 2018). By 1997, under the advisement of hired experts, the tribe began the process of paring down the existing rolls in order to meet the BAR's standards. This meant removing not only those whose Nipmuc descent could not be clearly enough documented for the fulfillment of the descent criterion, but also removing

those families who had too large a generational gap in their documented participation in activities at the sites and meetings that the BAR had already determined to be central to the political organization and community criteria in earlier feedback on the petition documents (described in the final determination [US DOI 2004]).

At this juncture, on the advice of experienced recognition professionals, the tribe decided that in order to achieve recognition, only those who did not endanger the tribe's ability to be acknowledged could remain on the rolls, at least for the time being. One interviewee pointed out that those who had been involved in the federal acknowledgment work 1990s understood this as something that was necessary in the moment and could be rectified later. Yes, people would need to be removed from the rolls, but they could also be added back on in the future when Nipmuc Nation was a federally recognized tribe with rights to self-determination of their membership (R. Gould 2018). At that time, and still today, federally recognized tribes have self-determination and create their own membership rules.

This difference in how membership was scrutinized among petitioning groups, more so than among the recognized, helped to pull petitioning groups into thinking in terms of a future anterior social tense (Povinelli 2002, 2006, 2011). That is to say, rather than thinking in terms of morality of the current moment, the process encouraged tribes to think about the actions of the present in terms of what will have been necessary to gain recognition, assuming that if the necessary actions were taken, however concerning they might be in the moment, then the positive outcome in the future would assure they had been necessary. Because of the way self-determination of membership was handled, the rules even led to the idea that whatever damage might be incurred in the present through

disenrollment could later be undone when recognized status was in hand and rights to self-determine their membership criteria applied to Nipmuc Nation as they did, already, to other federally recognized tribes. Povinelli (2002) has pointed out how this way of thinking about right and wrong has characterized the position of Indigenous peoples within late liberalism, and, as a number of other scholars have noted, part of the problem with multicultural recognition is how these forms of politics draw oppressed groups into patterns of thinking and behavior that are characteristic of late liberal modernity and, at times, the longstanding orientations of their own oppressors (Hankins 2014; Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson 2014).

“It has to be unquestionable.”

The demands for evidence through the paperwork process of federal acknowledgment are distinct from the forms of evidence required in court proceedings (Povinelli 2002) or other settings for making visible, in particular ways, the distinctiveness of Indigenous and minoritized groups.¹²⁵ In our interview in her office in 2018, Rae Gould, who had worked on different elements of the recognition research over the years, impressed upon me the strictness with which the descent criterion must be answered: “When you do the genealogy, you have to have all the birth certificates. . . You have to go all the way back. It has to be unquestionable” (R. Gould 2018, interview with author). This is a striking statement in light of the wording in the current regulation which stresses “reasonable likelihood” as the standard of proof (CFR 25 § 83.11). In my

¹²⁵ See, for example, Graham (2005) on the legibility of such identities in the context of tourism, Hankins (2014) on the need for evidence of the ongoing existence of a labor-related minority identity in Japan, Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) on how difference is made legible in ways that produced value, and Limerick (2018) on evidence of multilingualism as evidence of Indigeneity among Indigenous youth in Peru.

interview with Cheryll Toney Holley, the head of the traditional government at the time of our interview in 2018 and a member of the genealogical committee during the 1990s recognition work, she conveyed the same impression. She described how families were initially asked to provide their own documentation of links to a known Nipmuc ancestor, which were then scrutinized by those working for the tribe on the research in anticipation of the OFA's evaluation. The connection would have to meet the stipulations established by the genealogy committee, with documentation that went well beyond the usual oral family histories that people rely on in constructing their sense of family history and belonging to a wider kin network.

Beyond the severity of the demand for documentable facts and the degree of work it required to produce them, the demand for unquestionable evidence could change individuals' understandings of themselves and their relationships to others. Historical facts not known to the family in the present could crop up in the course of thorough documentation of family histories. In working on this documentation for the tribe, Gould had to apply this kind of scrutiny to her own family. She described to me calling her father after discovering that one of their own ancestors was born out of wedlock, a fact that had been concealed in the public story of this person's parentage. Further investigation conducted as part of the genealogical research for the petition had revealed that the father of that ancestor was a close relative of the mother. In her telling of the story, Gould left a moment for the implications to sink in before joking with me that maybe that "explains some things" about the family. "Yeah, so we find these things out. Some of them are very personal."

While she was able to make light of the new information discovered about her own family in the present, recalling how similar sorts of discoveries had affected fellow tribal members was upsetting for Gould. This was especially true when a particular discovery might make the person ineligible to remain enrolled as a tribal member, something that had not happened in the discoveries about her own family. Gould recalled having to call an 80-year-old woman to tell her that her father couldn't be her biological father, and her mother must have been impregnated by someone else. Working through the proof of ancestry had revealed that the man listed as her father on the woman's birth certificate had actually passed away eleven months prior to her birth and therefore could not have been her biological father. As a Nipmuc person who knew the families in question, the process felt different than it might have for an outsider. A lot of it was, as Gould, put it, "Way TMI, you know?"¹²⁶

Her story about the coworker was not Gould's only story about a conflict between membership rules and relationships. Among all the different difficult phone calls she had had to make while working for the tribe on the acknowledgment case, one especially stood out. Gould had started out telling her own family's story with humor, but she became more serious as she recounted a number of increasingly distressing memories from the membership work, before coming to the story about her good friend, someone active in the tribe and active in tribal cultural life.

. . . Um, and then having to call Suzanne¹²⁷ —I don't know if her name has come up. . . She's— she . . . does the [name of a Nipmuc community project]. She's

¹²⁶ "TMI" is an informal expression used to indicate someone is sharing "too much information," usually about a topic involving sex, bodily functions, or "dirty laundry."

¹²⁷ Suzanne is a pseudonym. I use a pseudonym here because this individual is not someone I worked with directly, so I did not have the opportunity to ask whether she would like her name included or not. If conducted ethnically and carefully, further research could more closely examine the perspectives of those on the receiving end of disenrollment. Such an examination was not within the scope of this dissertation

another one who was always there. She is my relative on the Brown side. She's a Brown. So, we go back to actually we have a common ancestor about four or five generations back, . . . but her family had moved to like out of the area, like New Jersey. So, she reconnected in the '90s.

Of Suzanne's Nipmuc identity, Gould (2018, interview with the author) explained,

. . . it's really important to her, like, this is who she is, and she always knew it, but you know, you're—you're raising kids, and da, da, da, so then finally you—you're at a place in your life. I mean, she's up here like every other weekend in the summer. She makes stuff happen. We run programs together. And I knew she was going to get this letter. And um, I was like . . .

There, in her office, where we had been talking, even laughing, for the last hour, Gould started to cry. I jumped into the break in the conversation to say, "We definitely don't have to go down that conversational road. If you don't want to." But she replied, "No, it's—it's—it's part of it." It's a part of what the experience of pursuing federal recognition was like. Speaking through tears, she continued: "I called her to let her know she was going to get the letter." She paused, wiping away tears: "I can't believe this is still like this. I mean," she paused and laughed, wryly, maybe bitterly, returning to that moment from decades ago, "She screamed at me, of course, and she had every right to, and—and it was more important to her, um—all of this was more important to her than it ever was to me, you know?"

Gould described "the worst part" of it all as lying in this contradiction. The tribe had come up with membership rules they thought would fit with the BIA standards and enforced them at great cost to themselves as individuals, to their relationships, and to the community. In end, as Gould put it, "We still didn't get federal acknowledgment and we alienated people."

project, which had to be limited strictly due to the way it brings together two distinct contexts for field research, this one in the United States and a second one in Norway.

“We should have just been ourselves”

Gould was not the only one to express the sentiment that they should not have done that, that the tribe should not have used those outside standards in an effort to fit into a box that just did not match their own sense of community, their own history, and “who we are.” This sentiment was recounted independently by Cheryl Toney Holley, the current head of the traditional government (*sonksq*) and a past member of the tribe’s genealogy committee during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Though she emphasized that, in a way, the disenrollments were fair because the membership criteria devised were applied to everyone equally; in retrospect, that didn’t mean that they had been right.

She gave the example of families linked to Natick, rather than Hassanamesit, who were removed from the roles because of their lack of documentable involvement with Hassanamisco during a period of about 100 years. The Nipmuc Nation leadership, under the advice of hired experts, had looked at the standards that the BIA would evaluate them under and made a determination: “This [removing certain families] is what we can do to meet that need.” In the present, Holley added her own understanding of the decision today, “Which is really the wrong approach. We should have just been ourselves.” This was a mistake in the sense that it had negative effects in the community, creating divides that were not easy to bridge decades later. Beyond that, however, it also had not worked. “If you read the government’s response,” Holley explained, “they keep saying ‘This tribe keeps changing their identity over and over and over again.’ But it was true. We kept changing according to what people told us what to do.” “Right,” I replied, “Trying to fit into this box.” Holley agreed, “Right. . . Exactly, and we just didn’t fit in the box. We are—We are who we are.”

For Nipmuc Nation, trying to fit the BIA's standards for membership led to a whole domain of largely negative experiences. Rather than providing the kind of positive recognition liberal multicultural theorists had seen as the logical outcome of state forms of recognition (Taylor [1992] 1994), the federal acknowledgment process became an occasion for a new form of scrutiny. The federal acknowledgment process compelled the tribe to apply outsiders' standards of authenticity not only to the community as a whole but also to individual tribal members, their family histories, and their relationship with the tribe. The federal acknowledgment office's expectations around membership did not align with the way tribal members ordinarily thought of and related to each other. As a result, the process of creating a membership list that would be acceptable to the BIA sparked division and hurt feelings among Nipmucs.

Membership Versus Belonging

Audra Simpson (2014), in her work on the complexities of membership for Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke, describes a division between the means of reckoning belonging and the value of relationships among Indigenous people versus the "if this, then that" rules of membership proscribed by law, regulation, or tribes' own rules. Simpson describes the first of the two from the perspective of those who have a connection to the community and a connection to the place (Kahnawake), as "feeling citizenship," where people feel they belong, regardless of bureaucratic rules. What Gould described about Suzanne, that she felt herself a part of the Nipmuc community and that she was acknowledged by other members an important and positive part of the community seems to fit with Simpson's

concept of “feeling citizenship.” The relationship, as Simpson describes it, is one of connection to both people and place.

Cheryll Holley’s description of how Nipmuc identity is not conditional upon belonging in one Nipmuc particular place rather than another illuminates the emplaced dimension of Nipmuc means of experiencing and reckoning belonging. As Holley put it, wherever you own land or live within Nipmuc country or not, whomever you marry, “You’re still you.” These logics about belonging and community shine through in the interviews because it was impossible for my interlocutors to discuss the federal acknowledgment process’s understandings of community without resorting to how their own understandings stood in contrast to the BIA’s.

Membership, formal enrollment in the tribe, exists according to other rules and measures. The tension is a productive but unresolved one in Simpson’s *Mohawk Interruptus*. Their reserve and their status as a government recognized Indigenous group is important to the ability of Mohawks to resist the frame of the settler colonial state, travelling between Canada and the United States through rights outlined in the Jay Treaty. Thus, to an extent there is a reason to invest in membership as a way of executing bureaucratic recognition. For Nipmucs, who ended their decades-long quest for recognition with a denial of the acknowledgment sought, the reasons to invest in strict rules around formal membership that are less clear, especially where membership rules take up logics about belonging that contradict the understandings at work within a community. Several of those I interviewed asked what the utility was of the tribal council government in a post-recognition era. Several emphasized that what they wanted to do going forward was to heal the relationships that had been damaged by the disenrollments

during the federal acknowledgment work. Community was still central but going forward it would be community on their own terms, not just in the sense of connection to a particular place or an uninterrupted genealogy of connection over generational time.

Leadership and Relationship

The criteria in the federal acknowledgment regulation also deal with the tribe as an explicitly political—not just social—entity. Political authority or influence was one of the three criteria that OFA considered Nipmuc Nation not to have adequately demonstrated in the negative final determination of 2004 (US DOI 2004, 1). The federal acknowledgment process evaluates the exercise of political authority or influence in the past and its continuity through time. At the same time, pursuing federal acknowledgment through the Bureau of Indian Affairs' administrative process was also a political project in the present. Pursuing acknowledgment required substantial political influence or authority of a particular sort in order to decide to pursue acknowledgment, to source the needed funding and expertise, to muster the cooperation of the membership in the completion of the petitioning process. The steps of the process itself, including the scrutiny of families' genealogies and histories of involvement with the tribe, ultimately provided an occasion for the Nipmuc individuals I spoke with to reflection on right behavior in leadership.

Ultimately, many of those involved understood the steps taken, by themselves and by others, as examples of flawed leadership because of the negative effects those actions had had on relationships within the Nipmuc community. This was the case in the present of 2018, even if the means had been, back in the 1990s or early 2000s, understood as

necessary to reach the end of federal acknowledgment. Even those who questioned how wise it had been to pursue administrative acknowledgment agreed about the importance of relationships and respect in leadership. Taken together, the set of interviews from 2018 shows common commitments to values around political influence that go counter to the idea of political authority anticipated in the federal acknowledgment regulations and OFA's standards for what counts as evidence of political authority or influence.

In a parallel to the ways that Nipmuc views on community and belonging departed from the logic of the membership rules, many of my Nipmuc interlocutors spoke about their experiences of and views on the federal recognition in terms of how the process had departed from their own ideas about what good, legitimate leadership should look like within their community. We can hear this sentiment in the comments, in the section on membership, above, even of those who were directly involved in the recognition work as research staff or as members of the genealogy committee in the 1990s when the major wave of disenrollments occurred in response to feedback from the BIA on the petition submitted in the mid-1990s. Several individuals who spoke from this position expressed deep regret about their involvement in actions that had had such negative long-term effects on individual families and on the Nipmuc community as a whole.

These reflections, taken together, reveal divergences in Nipmucs' values around leadership and the standard of "political influence over or among" expressed in the criteria of the federal acknowledgment program. Reflections on leadership reveal a divergence between the values or definitions of (good) political leadership as expressed by tribal members and the assumptions about political authority in the federal recognition

process in much the same way that Nipmuc understandings of community and belonging were incompatible with the expectations about community that issued from the Office of Federal Acknowledgment.

Relationships, Resentment, and the Pursuit of Recognition

One of the long-range effects of the disenrollments had been the creation of distance between disenrolled families and Nipmuc Nation. In the interviews I conducted for this dissertation research in 2018, I only spoke with one person whose family was disenrolled, a member of one of the Natick families that Holley referred to in her explanation of the logic behind the disenrollments. Disenrollment is still a sore subject, and I did not think it would be appropriate to try to contact people with whom I had no prior rapport to discuss this topic. However, I did already know one person closely enough I felt I could talk with about the effects of the recognition process on her as a person whose family was initially involved in the Nipmuc Nation recognition work but was sidelined from the project when they were disenrolled.

Kristin Wyman described her experiences of the recognition project primarily in the terms of the lasting effects of the recognition project on relationships. She described “a lot of animosity and resentment” between different groups and individuals that has lasted into the present.¹²⁸ In her view, these lasting effects were not only an outcome of the disenrollments themselves but of how the process was conducted, how people were treated, especially for those who were sidelined when they felt they had something to

¹²⁸ This view was seconded by Donald Gould, even though he told me that it was overall a good experience for him, personally, he talked about how for other people he was close to, it was really negative. Many of these people, he said, remain bitter about “the whole process.”

contribute. She mentioned a different case—someone with expertise and education in Indian law who was not valued or utilized—but her description could easily apply to some of the stories Gould conveyed.

Wyman understood her own community work in terms of making an effort to work together despite these divides. In doing so, she has to navigate the legacy of the recognition work, even though she had had no personal involvement with petitioning for recognition herself. She posited that because of her own generational distance from the events of the 1990s, it might be easier for her to focus on “uniting and moving forward” than it was for “people who are a little bit older and felt slighted by their direct treatment during the earlier stages of the recognition process by those who were running the show.” In her view, lack of direct experience with the federal acknowledgment work nonetheless affected how others in the wider Nipmuc community saw her:

I’ve always had to navigate coming into this after all that happened trying not to be naïve. Like, I think that’s how I was looked at for a long time, and maybe still. Like, just . . . I want us all to come together and work together on these things. And for the elders and the people that are older that went through the process, they’d be like, it’s just not that easy. Like, you’ve got to know who has done what, and this is what’s happened to us. (Wyman 2018, interview with the author)

As Wyman engaged with Nipmuc people on a variety of projects, spanning different Nipmuc groups and families, she ran into resentments among some of those who felt they had been mistreated during the federal acknowledgment work, who sometimes felt that what had happened in past decades could not be overlooked, even to pursue common purposes today. Wyman relayed to me how some people would say to her, “How can you go and work with them when, you know, they did that?” Recalling these experiences sparked a larger reflection on her part, on how she could contribute to my research on the experiences and outcomes of the pursuit of federal recognition:

So that's really been, I guess, what I can contribute most to this story. *It's just been my life of having to navigate resentment from that period of time.* In a way that gives honor and respect to the people who were in the fight and doing that. So, not like just dismissing their . . . rightful resentment or whatever. And then having to balance also with—there comes a time where we have to push through and move forward. (Wyman 2018, interview with the author)

Even though the recognition efforts were over, many of the experience from that time continued to condition peoples' relationships to one another in the present. They even affected those who had not been involved in the recognition effort firsthand. When I began to ask Kristin a question about how long the recognition work has been going on, I refer to the federal acknowledgment regulation coming into force in 1978. Wyman jumped in: "That's when I was born," in 1978. The period of the recognition effort has been ongoing her whole life: "It's just been my life of having to navigate resentment from that period of time" (Wyman 2018, interview with the author).

Many of the negative experiences interviewees recounted about the recognition had to do with the creation of the membership lists and verification of all members' genealogies, generational community, and political involvement with the tribe in order to satisfy the descent, community, and political authority criteria in the federal acknowledgment regulations. However, as Wyman pointed out, the difficulties—the roots of lasting resentments—had to do with more than just the disenrollments. These hard feelings are rooted in peoples' experiences that they were not treated well, that they were not treated with respect, or that others were not acting in appropriate, morally right ways. They were about leadership and about relationship; the very qualities the federal acknowledgment criteria were supposed to evaluate for the tribe's past were important parts of recognition work itself in the present, and, as it turned out, these would leave a lasting legacy decades after the recognition work itself was over.

Leadership Values Clashed with the Demands of the Recognition Process

Other interviewees also spoke about misgivings about leadership when it came to the recognition effort. This theme was not limited to those whose families had been disenrolled. Thomas Doughton, who has long been a vocal opponent of the Nipmuc Nation bid for acknowledgment through the administrative process, was nonetheless an active participant in the recognition effort at a few different points and provides one example. From his generational position, on the opposite side of the spectrum from Wyman, who was my youngest interviewee, Doughton saw the leadership style of those leading the recognition project as a real problem in contemporary Nipmuc life. He understood the kind of leadership that had been typical of the efforts toward government recognition as a breach of the norms of leadership in the Nipmuc community that had been embraced by the “old timers” of his youth.

During the course of our interview in 2018, Doughton returned several times to the idea that those who led recognition efforts had positioned themselves as authorities in ways that did not sit right with him. His first example of this was Zara CiscoeBrough, who was an early leader who had started Nipmucs down the path to federal acknowledgment, in addition to her many other contributions over the decades from 1960 to 1980 (Gould 2010). While acknowledging that he thought CiscoeBrough’s motivations were good, that she wanted to help others in the community, Doughton objected to the way CiscoeBrough went about doing it. He expressed the view that it was not appropriate for CiscoeBrough to gather people around her and treat Nipmuc-ness as “her club.” Doughton drew a distinction between CiscoeBrough’s style of leadership and an earlier

one that he identified with her own mother, also an important figure in the cultural life of Nipmucs in the 20th century:¹²⁹

Zara’s mother—because I grew up in a world where there was big Sarah, who was her mother—And then little Sarah, and big Sarah never claimed to be anything, so it was really somewhat striking when after her mother died, little Sarah became Princess Zara CiscoeBrough, and assembled her own tribe, as it were, and the tribe that she assembled was composed of her friends, whether they were Indianists, imposters, or wannabes, a few people of legitimate Nipmuc heritage, and other folks who just became part of what she was dealing with as if it were her club. (Doughton 2018, interview with the author)¹³⁰

Elsewhere in the interview, Doughton said he thought that Ciscoebrough had the right intentions, even if recognition had not panned out. He understood that she had meant to provide for the Nipmuc community. Doughton also described later leadership figures in similar terms, as sympathetic and as a “kinsman” or “kinswoman;” yet, whenever he thought someone took on too central a role, it provoked a reaction. Doughton ascribed such reactions not only to himself but to the wider community. Of one leadership figure from more recent decades, he said: “She’s related to most of us, and again, people would say, [her name], just sit down. You know?” He laughed, “Just relax” (Doughton 2018, interview with the author). Doughton acknowledged real kin connections and presumed that peoples’ intentions were good, nonetheless; in his view, the way in which people

¹²⁹ For more on Sarah Cisco, see Gould (2010, 59, 125–1900.

¹³⁰ McCullen (2002) has written about this kind of accusation of inauthenticity among Native people in New England. Addressing this particular phenomenon is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is worth noting the ways in which scrutiny of this kind is a part of wider social life in New England, not just the steps of the federal acknowledgment process. In my view, it is a weakness of McCullen’s (2002) work that she does not address what federal acknowledgment might have to do with the notions of authenticity based on “blood” and “culture” that she identifies among New England tribes (McCullen’s research was conducted during the mid-late 1990s, a time when federal acknowledgment, both administrative and Congressional, was a major political development among a number of the tribes features in her ethnographic study). See also McMullen (1996a) for the fuller scope of the work which is both historical and ethnographic.

conducted themselves was crucial to whether they were exhibiting good leadership or acting out of line.¹³¹

Even as some members of the Nipmuc community may have objected to the leadership style of key figures in the federal acknowledgment work, one could certainly argue that undertaking the federal acknowledgment process required some degree of more formal leadership, even a dogged refusal to “just sit down.”¹³² Other interviewees, some of them admirers of Zara CiscoeBrough, made the link between the creation of the Nipmuc Nation tribal council and the recognition project, explicitly recognizing the distinct needs of the acknowledgment process:

A separate tribal council formed for the purposes of overseeing the business of federal acknowledgment. Because it is a business. You know, you have to— There’s money. There’s people to be hired. There has to be somewhat of a corporate mentality . . . (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author)

While this connection was logical—pragmatic—for the interviewee who explained it like this, for others, this kind of shift was disturbing because it occasioned a form of leadership that was not appropriate in the Nipmuc community.

¹³¹ I also have to note that these criticism were more targeted at women leaders than at some of the leadership figures who were men, and there could well be an element in these comments of unwillingness to tolerate certain behaviors based on the gender of the person perceived as displaying them (or gender as an element of the context in the semiotic encounter could even be a condition of the perception of these behaviors as such). A central figure who was a man was much less the focus of this kind of comment, though he, too, was subject to critique. Another quote from the same interview raises the question of the role of gender: “Sarah Cisco, who created herself as Princess Zara CiscoeBrough in the 1960s—Gave herself this new identity and claimed that she was the hereditary squaw sachem of the Nipmuc people. Now when she did this in the 1960s, the old timers, including my grandfathers, my great-uncles, and a lot of people said, listen girlie, who died and made you . . . Who—You know? And there was a distance created because folks had always been close to the people who lived at Grafton” (Doughton 2018, interview with author).

¹³² The same could probably be said even of the work with the national recognition movement that preceded it, with which Zara CiscoeBrough was also involved since the early 1960s, which engaged the national scale (see Hauptman and Campisi 1988; Gould 2010).

Political Authority or Influence: “Over: Versus “Among”

As with the assumptions about the nature of community and appropriate standards for membership, Nipmuc ideas about leadership were at odds with the assumptions about political authority written into the federal acknowledgment regulation and enforced through the OFA’s particular interpretation of the regulatory text. The federal acknowledgment regulation today requires that:

The petitioner has maintained political influence or authority *over* its members as an autonomous entity from 1900 until the present. Political influence or authority means the entity uses a council, leadership, internal process, or other mechanism *as a means of influencing or controlling the behavior of its members* in significant respects, making decisions for the entity which substantially affect its members, and/or representing the entity in dealing with outsiders in matters of consequence. (CFR 25 § 83.11c, emphasis mine)

Though the language of the regulatory text also specifies that “This process is to be understood flexibly in the context of the history, culture, and social organization of the entity” (CFR 25 § 83.11c), summary statements about the seven criteria do not ordinarily include that instruction, instead focusing on the first element in criterion c, the maintenance of “political influence or authority over” members from historical times to the present (Fleming 2005).

Early on in my 2018 fieldwork, Christine Grabowski, a longtime recognition researcher, remarked on the irony of this particular criterion. Her insights help to illuminate the distinctions Doughton and Gould drew between the kind of authority expected in the federal acknowledgment process and other forms of leadership that were valued among the Nipmuc people I interviewed. Grabowski saw the regulations’ demand that tribes demonstrate “political authority over” their membership as an “inherent problem” with the criteria. This is because, in her experience working with tribes, she

said it was very uncommon that this kind of authority was the basis of their political organization. Instead, she suggested, the more common model in Native American contexts past and present was some form of “political authority *among*” the community. Leaders must build authority through respectful relationships with the community, not by trying to exert power over others:

[In societies where there’s] political authority among, not over. . . There’s no police coming in and saying you must do this, and if you don’t do it you’re out, or I’m going to punish you and whatever. That’s not how society operates . . . [or] even [how] the contemporary societies that I’ve worked with have operated. All of them at one point or another had very, what seemingly look like very strong leaders, and then I would say the guys got too big for their britches, and then got bounced out. . . ‘No, we’re not following you anymore.’ You know, you—‘you went off into cuckoo land, and you . . . You thought you could do this, this, and this, and order everybody around? We don’t operate like that, so you’re out of here.’ (Grabowski 2018, interview with the author)

Her description, though it was general, not about the Nipmuc case in particular, strikes a chord with Doughton’s assertion that when a kinsperson is making themselves central as an individual leader, the response is to say to them, “just sit down.”¹³³

Relational Versus Categorical

Overall, despite their different stances on individuals’ actions and their different relationships to the Nipmuc Nation federal acknowledgment bid, Nipmuc individuals I spoke with about their experiences of recognition and its outcomes applied some of the same values in coming to their conclusions about the federal recognition history. Both where they highlighted positive outcomes and where they cited negative ones, the determinations were made in terms of their effect on relationships. For example, Holley

¹³³ Hermes (1999) addresses these issues of control over others and jurisdiction of Native authorities during the early colonial period, albeit among Algonquian people in Connecticut, further south from Nipmuc territories. I was not able to locate any source that specifically addresses the nature of political authority among Nipmuc people, especially not that addresses this topic over time and from an insider perspective rather than in the terms of the federal acknowledgment criteria.

spoke both of how the disenrollments had been a negative experience in terms of how their had ruptured relationships with Nipmuc people who were excluded from membership lists. However, when asked about any positive outcomes of the recognition effort, she pointed to all the history and documentation that had been assembled, not for its own sake, but as something that could be passed on to future generations to link them to their ancestors.

Rae Gould, too, recalled experiences that had damaged or betrayed her relationships with fellow tribal members as “the worst part” of the acknowledgment work. When asked about positive outcomes, these were also in terms of relationships. She emphasized the close friendship she and Holley had built and sustained over the years, in part through their involvement in the recognition effort. Rae Gould’s father, Donald Gould, who had been a tribal council member during the 1980s and 1990s, recalled all the people he met and everything he had learned from them as a positive outcome of his involvement in the recognition effort, even though the outcome, in terms of the final determination, had not been what he had hoped for.

The federal acknowledgment regulation, even though it is about characterizing collectivities, is primarily about categorization and fixity, not about ongoing negotiation of relationships.¹³⁴ The purpose of the process and the office of federal acknowledgment, as originally proposed in 1977 by the American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIRPC), was as a temporary office, that would no longer be needed once the currently known non-federally recognized tribes had been acknowledged. Acknowledgment would

¹³⁴ I believe this is part of what one interviewee meant when she called the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) rules that prohibit membership for non-federally recognized tribes as “colonial”—they utilize a logic of strict categorization that does not account for the building of relationships, and, perhaps even more so, they utilized US federal determinations to constitute those categories.

serve as a way to fix tribal political formations in time, linking them—in the original version of the criteria—to a time before European contact and tracing them as unchanging and uninterrupted entities through time to the present. These expectations of timelessness do not account for the changing circumstances Indigenous peoples have confronted and the ways they have adapted. A number of federally recognized tribes that were acknowledged before the 1970s or through routes other than the administrative pathway are clearly newer political formations bringing together multiple groups, taking in displaced families, or building a tribal community and polity in a totally new place after displacement from tribal homelands. Only non-federally recognized tribes pursuing administrative recognition are held to the strict standards and need for “unquestionable” proof as demanded by the federal acknowledgment process. For New England tribes, the scrutiny they met in the acknowledgment process mirrored the disbelief with which their identities were received by wider publics who had long labeled particular Indians the “last of” their tribe (O’Brien 2013). This drive toward fixity and finality—toward settling questions of recognition—is not only a feature of liberal approaches to social difference, it is also a core feature of a settler colonial state and society.

One of the points I aim to emphasize in analyzing the legal model of tribal authenticity in the federal acknowledgment regulations alongside social models of Indigeneity and associated means of reckoning belonging within Indigenous communities is to make clear that these operate on different premises and with different assumptions about fixity. The federal acknowledgment process aims to make a “final determination” once and for all of the status of a group, whereas other notions of belonging, and even of authority, emphasize relationship, including the ongoing negotiation of the terms of

relationships. Social determinations of identity and relationship require only fractional congruence to social models, the terms and ends of which are themselves fungible. They do not require a standard of meeting *all* criteria, unimpeachably. However, social models often do position certain perceivable things as essential signs of particular social kinds (Keane 2013; Agha 2007, 74).

Here I move from how Nipmuc people experienced the process of trying to fit the legal models and being evaluated in its terms toward an analysis of why, in light of the hegemonic ontologies to which they were subject among the general public, some Nipmuc individuals actively took up select concepts that derive from the legal model. In the next section of this chapter, I shift away from a direct examination of how Nipmuc people experienced the process of trying to fit the federal criteria. Instead, I examine Nipmucs' interaction with some of the concepts central to the administrative recognition process. I examine how the emphasis on documentation and "verification" of Indigenous identity in the federal acknowledgment process, though problematic, did provide an alternative to social models originating in colonial ontologies that had long been enforced upon and wielded against Indigenous people in New England. These racial ontologies categorized all "Indians" as a racial class, united by "an inherent racial *nature*," since the 17th century (Brooks 2018, 191, emphasis in original).¹³⁵ Racial models and their associated modes of perception (Rosa and Flores 2017a, 2017b) take certain perceivable things—not just actions but also, most prominently, features of embodiment—as essential and unavoidable signs not only of identity but also of either superiority or inferiority. For Indigenous people in New England, who can be read as belonging to a range of racial

¹³⁵ Here, I use "ontology" in Kockelman's (2013) sense, which closely mirrors Agha's (2007) location of "ontology" under his more encompassing term "model."

categories, a legal model of identity with fixed terms and measures offered a potential means to over overdetermining racial logics and to counter them with an authorized legal status.¹³⁶

Reckoning: Race, Recognizability, and “Verification”

Many of the features of the Nipmuc sense of community, belonging, and political organization, as they came up across interviews in 2018, were incompatible with the federal acknowledgment regulation, a reality that interviewees agreed upon despite their distinct stances toward the recognition effort. In the final section of this chapter, I examine one way in which, in the very terms of interviewees’ reflections, they picked up, adopted, or adapted, some of the concepts used in the context of federal acknowledgment. In particular, I examine how they mobilized the concept of “verification,” an idea that seems to draw on, or at least be closely aligned with, the demand for “unquestionable” documentation of descent that was a feature of the acknowledgment process.

The use of the words “verify,” “verified,” and “verification” were a striking feature of the interviews when I examined them together as a set. Why did several of my interviewees, some of whom disapproved of the way federal acknowledgment had been pursued and others of whom regretted their own roles in it, embrace this part of the federal acknowledgment standards about the need for proof? Given the negative experiences around creating and enforcing membership rules, why take up this element of

¹³⁶ Where anthropologists have long written about how language plays this role in a variety of contexts, serving as the most elevated, or essential sign of identity (Irvine 1989; Irvine and Gal 2000; Eisenlohr 2006; Urla 2012; Woolard 1998; and others), in the US empire-state race fills this role, often, today, in conjunction with language, in what Rosa and Flores (2017b) call “raciolinguistic ideologies,” which locate inherent, natural, difference both in language practices and in features of physical embodiment.

the federal acknowledgment language and the assumptions and expectations about belonging that it entails? This question is especially compelling because the demand for genealogical documentation, occasioned by the need for “verification” of tribal engagement and genealogy, had been the cause of the disenrollments, which many recognized as the most damaging element of the federal acknowledgment process, “the worst part” of the experience and the cause of lasting “resentment” (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author; Wyman 2018, interview with the author). Clearly, notions of “verification” of ancestry had failed to account fully for the complexity of community belonging and kin relationships, so why might Nipmuc interviewees have continued to use this language, even after they had declared themselves “done” with the project of trying to fit the standards imposed by the Office of Federal Acknowledgment?

Consideration of the societal context in which some Nipmucs embraced “verification” reveals an explanation for this seemingly anomalous embrace of expert standards of scrutiny. In the third section of this chapter, I begin by laying out the concept of verification as it appeared in the interviews. Then, having established this concept, I provide an explanation of how the standard of verification, though potentially problematic, allowed Nipmucs to avoid the predominant racial modes of assigning social identity with which they found themselves constantly confronted in the absence of another authoritative way of determining identity. Rather than reading an individual’s identity from features of their embodiment, using widespread racial rubrics for reading identity from the body, “verification” drew on different sources of evidence, complex signs existing in written records and their close interpretation.

Verification

In talking about their experiences of and views on federal acknowledgment, many of the interviewees talked about the need for “evidence,” “proof,” and “documentation.” Those who worked on recognition-related genealogical research pointed out how the strict standards around descent derived directly from the federal acknowledgment process as it was administered through the federal government. As already quoted above, Rae Gould pointed out that “when you do the genealogy. . . You have to go all the way back. *It has to be unquestionable*” (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author, emphasis mine). Her mention of the demand to “go all the way back” is a reference to the federal acknowledgment process’s requirement not only of genealogies, but also of a link back to some original list of tribal members in order to be intelligible to federal acknowledgment staff.

Many of the interviewees embraced the need for evidence, talking about the need for “verification” of identity, and embracing the forms of proof that were used in the process. One interviewee was able to—within just moments—pull up a picture on her phone of Nipmuc ancestors posing in a black and white photo of a regional Pan-Indian organization.¹³⁷ When I asked her if there had been positive outcomes from the recognition work, she replied that the positive part was having all the information and documentation to pass down to future generations, which would never have been

¹³⁷ See McMullen (1994) on these organizations’ history and Gould (2010) on how they are related to Nipmuc history in particular.

assembled if not for the recognition effort.¹³⁸ Another even discussed outright the need for authentication of descent to avoid the influence of charismatic “imposters”—people whose claims of Nipmuc heritage were dubious—within the community.

Even though some interviewees pointed out that source for these strict standards around genealogy was the federal acknowledgment office, other interviewees repeatedly used a language of “verification” to describe legitimate belonging in the community. This uptake of some of the elements introduced through the federal acknowledgment process was also evident in some of the concepts that united different interviews. Two interviewees who spoke about “verification” were Cheryll Holley, who had been involved in what she described as the “third phase” or acknowledgment research, and Thomas Doughton, who was involved in that work at times but spoke much more about the Nipmuc Tribal Acknowledgment Project (NTAP) of the late 1980s, funded through a status clarification grant. According to Doughton’s narrative, the NTAP’s proponents undertook the project “to get our real history drafted, to establish a bona fide list of people claiming to be of Nipmuc heritage.” He saw the value of the project as its role in producing a list of people of “*verifiable* Nipmuc heritage” (my emphasis).

Holley used similar terminology. When I asked about the earlier work of NTAP, she said, “I think that’s what that status verification *was* was all genealogy. . . . And assembling a—a list . . . of names of Nipmuc descendants” (Holley, interview, 2018, emphasis an approximation of the original audio). It wasn’t until rereading the interview months later that I noticed she had said status “verification” rather than status

¹³⁸ “So the positive things that we—we know a lot more about our history than we did before. So we have like documentation. We have, um, a lot of great stuff to save for future generations and things like that.” (Holley, interview, 2018)

clarification. Elsewhere in the interview, she talked about how Native Americans use historical lists of tribal members generated by the US government or state governments “to verify their self” for membership in federally recognized tribes today, not just in the petitioning process. Though the emphasis on genealogy may have increased through engagement with federal acknowledgment, clearly multiple figures in the tribe, who had been active at different stages in the acknowledgment work, understood there to be an appropriate role for “verification.” One of them even stated that the acquisition of genealogical and historical knowledge and documentation was one of the primary positive outcomes of engaging in the recognition efforts.¹³⁹

Racial Rubrics

On the surface, it is surprising that Nipmuc people took up the concept of “verification” considering how poorly the federal acknowledgment regulation’s definitions about community and membership had served Nipmuc Nation. In moments like the phone calls described by Rae Gould, rules of membership clashed with other modes of reckoning belonging. Quite clearly, in such moments, the “verification” of ancestry had failed to account fully for the complexity of community belonging and kin relationships. Why, then, might Nipmuc interviewees have continued to use the language of genealogical “verification,” even after the end of their effort to petition for federal recognition?

¹³⁹ See McMullen (2002) on the importance of “blood” as a way of reckoning belonging and authenticity in Native New England; as I have mentioned earlier, a lack of engagement with the role of the federal acknowledgment (and outsiders’ standards and ontologies more generally) is a limitation of McMullen’s analysis. She does not overtly consider how government practices may have influenced northeastern tribes’ practices and conceptions around authenticity.

An element of the interviews that I have not yet touched on in this chapter provides one possible explanation. Throughout most of our conversations, interviewees focused closely on the federal acknowledgment process when I asked them questions about “recognition.” Clearly, federal recognition was the most salient referent for this word, in their own experience, or at least in the context of an interview for this academic project, which did, after all, focus on the federal acknowledgment process as well as social recognizability. As described in Chapter 3, most interviewees explicitly acknowledged the link between federal acknowledgment and public recognition of their identities as Nipmuc people and as legitimately Indigenous people.

However, even as political recognition was the primary subject of discussion, social recognizability was inevitably discussed as well. In addition to conveying their experiences of the official recognition process, interviewees also commented on their experiences of the social *recognizability*—or non-recognizability—of their identities to people they encounter in their day-to-day lives, including as they pursue political projects as a tribe. Here, the terms of recognizability were defined not by the *legal* model of seven criteria used in the construction and evaluation of federal acknowledgment petitions. Instead, the recognition or non-recognition of Nipmuc identities in everyday life was governed by the terms of widespread *social* models of identity rooted in commonsense assumptions about race.

Many scholars of historical and contemporary New England have pointed out the importance of racial categorization in shaping how white New Englanders have perceived local Indigenous people.¹⁴⁰ The literature on race as a foundation component of the US

¹⁴⁰ Several historical contributions that focus more explicitly on race and involve the Nipmuc context include: Brooks (2018) in her account of the imprisonment and internment of Nipmucs who had not

social and political formation is even larger and more prominent. Scholars of race in the United States have argued for at least a generation that racial formation is integral to state formation (Omi and Winant 2014 [1986]). More recently, sociologists of race in the US have argued that the US is best understood not as a nation state but as an “empire-state,” wherein segments of the population are organized in hierarchy on the basis of race (Jung et al. 2015, 56). In New England, as throughout much of the United States, public common sense about Indigeneity considers this social category primarily as a *racial* category.¹⁴¹ This underlying, often unspoken understanding supports the widespread expectation that Indigenous identity should be readable from particular features of a person’s embodied self-presentation, both those that are visibly perceivable and those perceivable through other semiotic modalities, like sound.¹⁴²

The broader Nipmuc community today, both within and beyond Nipmuc Nation, includes people who are routinely perceived as white, Black, Latino, or belonging to other locally or regionally relevant ethnic or racial categories.¹⁴³ Even though features of

participated in Metacom’s rebellion on the basis of race; O’Brien (2003) on 18th century dispossession of land; Mandell (1998, 2008) on 19th century developments; and Gould (2013) on how assumptions about identity as linked to race during the 19th century were reinscribed in the negative final determination against Nipmuc Nation in 2004.

¹⁴¹ Such practices were contested among the Nipmucs I spoke with; embraced by some and derided by others (even as they acknowledged that “the old people” did do this to some extent, if differently). For example, Thomas Doughton cited the reliance on racial logics and appearance, including the use of traditional dress, as a problem: “[at regional powwows,] there is no standard by which anyone gets to participate. Anyone who shows up in leathers and feathers gets to be part of the circle” (Doughton 2018, interview with the author).

¹⁴² As Rosa and Flores (2017a, 2017b) have pointed out by introducing the notion of *raciolinguistic ideologies*, racial determinations often involve both features of embodiment and features of language use as elements in rubrics that read peoples’ actions and appearances through racialized rubrics of identity (or ontologies in Kockelman’s [2013] sense). Taking up a study of the role of registers of speech as an element of what is interpreted according to circulating social models of Indigeneity would be a fascinating subject for future anthropological work in the Indigenous northeast but goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁴³ For instance, some parts of New England have a prominent Portuguese population, which may be considered distinct from the Latina/o people more generally. See Rosa (2019) for an ethnographic project that focuses on these local distinctions in terms of metapragmatic models and amalgamations of locally salient categories in part through national-scale discourse and in part through institutions (like schools), albeit in a different geographic context, in Chicago.

these individuals' embodiment are routinely read as belonging to different racial categories, they are at times part of the same immediate families and often belong to the same extended families. This is certainly true within those wider lineages that were mapped out in such detail in the recognition process, but it is also the case within closely knit families that include aunts, uncles, and cousins as well as siblings, parents, and grandparents. Nipmuc interviewees were highly aware of how they—or members of their families or their Nipmuc relations—might be judged as insufficiently Native based on their appearance.

And yet, interactions that turn on questions of race and recognition are often more complex and confusing than simple misapprehension or disbelief. Kristin Wyman recounted to me an interaction with someone she knew from her agroecology work.¹⁴⁴ This person, whom Wyman considered a friend, was involved with a group working on local and sustainable farming practices among “farmers of color” in the region. Wyman told me how this friend, whom she had met at an event she helped host at Hassanamesit, reached out to Wyman about a different regional event, hosted by a different group of Native Americans on a similar theme. He wanted to know if she could advise him about the location of the event and the practical details of how to get there. Wyman had heard of the event but was not close with the organizers and was uncertain about some of their past actions in terms of their relationship to tribal authorities of a neighboring federally recognized tribe. When she replied apologetically that she didn't have the details about the event, the friend sent her back a text message that read: “It's ok, I asked the Black Indians.” Wyman was confused and offended: “Was it a joke I was supposed to get?”

¹⁴⁴ Agroecology is the application of ecological and sustainability principles in farming. See a profile on later work in this vein in *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Eastern Woodlands Rematriation 2020).

While Wyman describes herself as “white-passing,” many of her family members are Black. They were not involved in the event this friend was talking about even though, yes, it was true that many of that event’s organizers were Black and Indigenous. Wyman was not sure what to make of the comment, but when she told the story to me, she was quite clear about how she experienced it:

I mean, that was hurtful because my work is never just about me, singlehandedly. It [is about] my whole family, my whole people. So, I’m white passing, but um . . . when you’re saying something like that to me, you’re making me feel like I really gotta, like, um—you’re, you’re attacking my whole entire family, which are Black too. (Wyman 2018, interview with the author)

Wyman told this story as just one recent example in a lifetime of similar experiences. As she told me about this experience, she reflected on the pattern aloud, trying to explain to me why this continually happened: “I think they’re misunderstanding the . . . uniqueness of the communities here and how much we have intermixed—that it is not black and white.” The fact of the mixed heritage of so many Nipmuc and other Native people in the region, she said, laughingly, “goes to show there’s like interaction—there’s not that much animosity!” Nonetheless, race is an important axis of social life within Indigenous communities in New England and in their interactions with other people, who are themselves located differently in societal racial hierarchies, and with whom Indigenous people inevitably interact.

Multiple Interlocking Hierarchies

Wyman suggested there was one other dimension to this issue: the way that other Native communities reacted to New England tribes’ diversity of physical appearances. Wyman remarked that “other parts of Indian country” see Nipmucs as “‘diluted’ because

we're so intermixed," then suggested that old ideas that Native people would look one certain way were outmoded (Wyman 2018, interview with the author). Like many of the historical experiences that affected Eastern groups first, this shift would eventually reach other Indigenous people on the continent. In a separate conversation a couple of weeks later, another of my interviewees picked up this same tension. Race is not only a factor in how non-Native populations perceive Native people in New England, it is also how Native Americans from elsewhere in the United States perceive Nipmuc people and neighboring tribes. Rae Gould told a story that illustrates that point quite clearly, emphasizing how it affects individuals from many New England tribes and how it is even more significant for Nipmucs because, unlike some neighboring tribes, they continue to lack federal acknowledgment.

In the course of the interviews, many of my Nipmuc interlocutors drew on recent experiences as much as the past in explaining how they experienced the lack of federally recognized status and difficulties with being recognized as Native American in their everyday lives, outside the federal acknowledgment. Rae Gould, for example, drew on her experience, at that moment in 2018, trying to organize a gathering about Indigenous resistance that aimed to draw participants from across the country to be hosted locally in Massachusetts. She explained that early conversations with New England tribes had revealed that there was a lot of concern about how they would be perceived in this kind of setting by those arriving from outside the region "because we're not a rez Indian with long straight dark hair." I prompted her to explain further, asking, "There's some kind of hierarchy there?"

“Oh yeah,” she replied, “there’s a hierarchy—there’s many.” She launched into explaining how she understood her own position as a Nipmuc person among the wider range of Native Americans in the United States. First among these she pointed out, “There’s a federal acknowledged, non-federal acknowledged [divide, which] is a very strong and distinct hierarchy.” Important Native American political organizations at both the regional and national levels continue to exclude non-federally recognized tribes from their organizations. She pointed out a second hierarchy in quick succession, “There’s the you know, physical characteristics, like do you phenotypically look Indian.” To illustrate this point, she told me the story of a Narragansett young man, whom she had spoken to recently. He had gone to college at Haskell University. Haskell Indian Nations University is a public tribal land-grant university in Lawrence, Kansas, originally founded as an Indian boarding school and later developed into a university run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Native American students from federally recognized tribes. The Narragansett young man, who could attend by virtue of his tribe’s federally recognized status, was thinking about returning to the same institution for graduate school, and he and Gould, who worked in higher education, were chatting about his experiences there. Gould paraphrased to me a comment she had made to him:

So, I was like, “Well, at least you—you have the look,” because he does. Like you look at him, there’s no question to me that he’s a Native person, right? But he goes “Oh. It’s so funny you should say that,” and then he goes off about how when he’s there, people are like so, the people will actually say, “what are you.” They won’t say “who are you,” they’ll say what are you . . . So, he—he—he said, you know, I’m this and I’m that, and then there was one other like I—heritage, identity, nationality, whatever you want to call it. I won’t use the more racial term that he mixed in there. . . I think it was African American. (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author)

And the response from people at Haskell, once that information was out in the open, was “Like oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, now I see it. . . Like ‘Oh, okay.’ So you’re this mixture kind of, you know, you’re not a pureblood.” In her telling of the story, Gould tried to pull it together for me, to make sense of the reaction: “There are all these—Identity markers that go on, even among Native people.” The fact that Narragansett are federally acknowledged did not protect this young man from skepticism based on this appearance, but lack of federal acknowledgment and the fact that many Nipmucs do not “phenotypically look Indian” to Native Americans from elsewhere in the country constituted a form of double marginalization, along two of many hierarchies that shape Native Americans’ experiences of their own identities and how others receive them.

Gould also spoke about how the negative final determination positioned Nipmucs as “wannabes” and only added to their exclusion from organizations and events focused on Native issues in New England, even when those events take place on or nearby Nipmuc homelands. Gould told a story of a Nipmuc tribal member showing up at an event on a university campus. The event focused on the invisibility of Native students at the university, most of whom came from tribes from other regions of the US. It featured a big-name speaker in Native and Indigenous Studies. Despite this focus on invisibility, no one had reached out to include people from local tribes. The Nipmuc young woman surprised the organizer when she stood up from the crowd to point out the lack of deliberate inclusion of local tribes as a form of hypocrisy. In Gould’s telling, this surprised was amplified by the woman’s appearance, because, as Gould described it, “she looks like an African American young woman.” While stating that she didn’t know if she would have the patience to even go there herself, Gould reflected on the story with

respect for a next generation standing up and raising their voices against Nipmuc illegibility and oversight.

Racial determinations, because they are so influential in everyday readings of identity, cannot be divorced from struggles for political recognition. The fact that denial of political status is also experienced as denial of identity is why desire for recognition “[oozes] from every person,” as Christine Grabowski put it. Thomas Doughton, too, spoke of the illegibility of Nipmucs’ mixed heritage as one force fueling the drive to gain federal recognition, though there were clear obstacles to fulfilling the BIA’s criteria. One interviewee explained, “there are folks that take [the] position that federal recognition would have been about some kind of affirmation [of identity].” Doughton suggested they took this position at least in part because they don’t feel their identity is recognized by “outsiders,” and the government’s recognition could in some way overrule such everyday misrecognition. According to Doughton’s theory, the denial of affirmation of identity in everyday life was one driving factor for pursuing official forms of acknowledgment.

Verification as an Alternative to Racist Readings of Identity?

In the context of the omnipresence and overdetermining power of racial readings of identity, the notion of genealogical verification of Nipmuc heritage provided an alternative way of making determinations of belonging. Historical and genealogical verification had had an expert- and legally authorized backing that racial logics, by the 1990s, lacked. Holley, in describing the work of the genealogy committee did regret its effects but also emphasized that the rules were fair, in the sense that the same standards were applied to everyone’s family histories. “Verification,” though it ultimately created

other problems both within and beyond the federal acknowledgment process, did contribute in a meaningful way to contest racist readings of identity (and value) from features of embodiment. Genealogical verification provided different criteria for legitimacy of identity. In fact, by relying on historical records and reading those for signs of Nipmuc heritage, a logic of verification sidestepped the very semiotic channel—embodied appearance—where perceptions were overdetermined by racist common sense.¹⁴⁵ Applying a standard of “verification” averted the assumptions about who a person is based on readings of their phenotypic features that had long affected Native people in New England, both in everyday life and in official documentation of their communities.

Ironically, however, even as verification might have provided an alternative way of reckoning and reaffirming belonging in Nipmuc family lines that could be utilized in contemporary life, the influence of much earlier racist modes of reckoning identity cast a shadow on the evaluation of the Nipmuc petition in the early 21st century. In one of the only existing scholarly critiques of the Nipmuc final determination, Gould (2013) has written about how the determinations of identity delivered by John Milton Earle in his 1861 state-commissioned report on the Indians of Massachusetts were guided by his own racial—and racist—assumptions.¹⁴⁶ Gould’s account emphasizes how the details of OFA staff’s research and their reliance on historical determinations of identity steeped in 19th

¹⁴⁵ I use the term “common sense” here in the way Crehan (2016) uses the term. She draws this term from Antonio Gramsci, whose notion of common sense focuses on how certain taken for granted ideas obscure power relations in any given society. This is the phenomena that authors in semiotic anthropology have written about as “naturalization” (Agha 2007, 76; Parmentier 1994, 176). By naturalization, Agha (2007) means the linking of one order of semiotic phenomena to a higher order of meaning so that the contingency of the former is obscured to those within the social domain of the higher order phenomenon, at least for a span of historical time.

¹⁴⁶ See also Thee (2006).

century racism brought those racial standards into the federal acknowledgment process, even where they may be absent from the language of the regulation itself.

According to one of the long-time recognition research professionals I interviewed, this particular problem about the use of questionable historical membership lists was not just a problem in the Nipmuc case. It was an overarching problem with how OFA interpreted the regulation. The “genealogical component” of the regulation itself only states that individuals on the tribal membership list must descend from someone who was a member of a historical Indian tribe:

That’s what the regulations say . . . but here’s where in fact—the federal process is skewed. Because what, um, *what OFA has done systematically, is look for some original list of, you know, here is the tribe at X date, and then everybody has to descend from that.* Well, that’s not what the regulations state. You don’t need to go to an original list, and it really doesn’t matter at what point that list is. (Grabowski 2018, interview with the author, emphasis mine)

She went on to say why this distinction between the regulation text and the OFA process was important:

And I’ll tell you why that’s important. Because for example, in New England . . . there were quite a number of tribes who were all administered by their . . . colony and then by the state, alright? [These tribes] all had overseers. . . *But they didn’t have an original list in any of those tribes.*” (Grabowski 2018, interview with the author, emphasis mine)

In Massachusetts, such lists only came later, when the state set out to *create* lists, as through the Bird and Briggs reports in the second half of the 19th century, which became so decisive in OFA’s evaluation of the Nipmuc Nation petition.

Not only did these reports overtly rely on racist assumptions, as Gould (2013) has demonstrated, the lists these Commissioners produced were created after centuries of colonial relations. Archaeologists and historians have argued that Nipmuc people took up strategies of hiding in plain sight during the 18th and 19th centuries as a way to cope with

colonial oppression and remain in their original homelands during a time when many Native people relocated outside the region (Calloway 1997; Doughton 1997, 2016; O'Brien 1997, 2006, 2010; Gould et. al 2013, 2020; G. Pezzarossi 2014; Gould 2020; H. Pezzarossi 2020). By citing these 19th century reports as evidence that certain ancestors were not members of a continuous Nipmuc community, the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) was redoubling the effects of historical racism, discrimination, and misunderstanding. The OFA used lists that resulted from historical racism and misunderstanding as evidence justifying the denial of acknowledgment to Nipmuc people today, even as the federal acknowledgment process was initially designed to account for just these sorts of injustices against non-federally recognized groups (see AIPRC 1977, 8, 461–479).

Caught in a Double Bind

By the time of the Nipmuc Nation final determination in 2004, 24 years had elapsed since Zara CiscoeBrough sent the original letter of intent to petition to the BIA in 1980. The original honeymoon period at the Branch of Acknowledgment Research was long in the past, and federal acknowledgment, especially in New England, had, in the eye of the public and state authorities, become linked to gaming and was therefore seen as a subject of controversy (Cramer 2005a, 2005b; Cattelino 2010; Riley 2016). For all of the effort Nipmuc Nation had expended in trying to make themselves legible under the federal criteria, they were ultimately denied in part based on the very racial categorizations that it had once seemed federal acknowledgment might help them escape, or at least temper.

The adoption of the idea of the logic of “verification” among some Nipmuc people reflects a reaction to the challenging conditions of recognizability they were confronted with in a society governed by a racial binary and steeped in narratives of Indigenous disappearance (O’Brien 2010). It can be understood as one way that Nipmucs have attempted to translate or accommodate their own modes of reckoning belonging in which kin relations are so important into terms that were intelligibility to federal authorities. Verification, with its strict standards of historical evidence, differed from how peoples’ kin relationships were understood before the federal acknowledgment project.¹⁴⁷ However, even though it introduced new language and new practices for thinking about belonging—many of which had troubling effects—verification seemed to present a possible way out of the racial rubrics that Nipmucs and other northeastern Native people had long been forced to navigate.

Given the ways in which Nipmucs adapted to the federal acknowledgment process as an opportunity, even taking up key ideas from that process, like “verification,” it is notable that in the end they failed to gain recognition. The Office of Federal Acknowledgment’s (OFA) process for evaluating historical Nipmuc identity in the present was haunted by the racial determinations that non-Indigenous observers had inscribed into state-authorized historical records in the 19th century. Wherever Nipmucs adapted to the BIA’s concepts—whether that be in adjusting their membership criteria to suit the ideas of community as rooted in place or emphasizing some kinds of leadership over others—this attempt to articulate their history in terms of the criteria provided in the

¹⁴⁷ In fact, both Gould’s and Holley’s descriptions of genealogical research suggested that many of the forms of evidence gathered for the purposes of genealogical verification had not been widely understood earlier by Nipmuc people as key sources of historical information.

way BIA staff would interpret them was held against them. As Cheryll Holley (2018, interview with the author) pointed out, Nipmucs' attempts to present themselves in a way that would be acceptable to the BIA ultimately backfired, with evaluators judging the group insufficiently authentic because of the changes made to the petition document in response to evaluators' feedback and experts' advice.

It becomes clear from the Nipmuc Nation experience that in order to gain recognition a group must be legible in terms of the acknowledgment criteria, but they must also somehow succeed in conveying the impression that this version of their history—which, by the very nature of the petition document itself is tailored to those criteria—exists *suis generis*, before the start of the petitioning process (Grant Costa 2018, interview with the author). What Nipmuc Nation faced is what Povinelli (2002, 8) has called an “impossible demand.” Liberal multicultural forms of recognition insist that Indigenous people must “desire and identify with the cultural traditions in a way that just so happens, in an uncanny convergence of interests, to fit the national and legal imaginary of multiculturalism” (Povinelli 2002, 8). To do so, they must at once “orient . . . toward” the nation's and the law's image of Indigenous authenticity while simultaneously keeping that reorientation hidden from view, “so as not to have their desires for some economic certainty in their lives appear opportunistic” (Povinelli 2002, 8).

While economic components were important motivators for the Nipmuc recognition effort, as I have detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, there are further stakes to the kind of protracted bureaucratic process that Povinelli (2002) finds in the Australian court system and that I examine with the US federal acknowledgment process here. In

engaging with these processes, groups like Nipmuc Nation do not just reorient themselves to outside standards and grapple with the need to cover their tracks in doing so. As I believe to be the case with the Nipmuc use of the verification concept, they attempt to bend the pre-existing scaffolding of recognition processes to their own purposes, to avoid the features of others' judgments of their identities that they find to be the most problematic, and to try to assert "who we are" in language that outside evaluators will understand. Even where they are sure they have accomplished this—a stance Gould (2013, 213–214) attributes to those who worked most closely on the recognition work leading up to the 2004 final determination—they may fail. Such experiences speak to the difficulties of the position Nipmucs find themselves in after the recognition process is over. Even having adapted to the terms of contemporary authorities, they find that their accommodation to those terms is wielded against them as evidence of inauthenticity *and* that the standards of past eras, which the current process was supposed to replace, are cited as evidence that they fail to meet the stipulated criteria.

Conclusion

Interviews with those directly involved in the Nipmuc Nation effort to secure federal acknowledgment and a few of those affected but less directly involved reveal the wide range of experiences that Nipmuc people understand as linked to recognition, in both the social and political senses of the term. One consistent thread through many of my interviewees' narratives was an experience of conflict between their own standards—on issues like reckoning belonging, constituting a community, and enacting leadership—and the standards of the recognition process on community, membership, and political

authority. Most often, interviewees focused on how standards and values must be continually renegotiated, how they become apparent, and how they can be contested only in the course of social life as it is lived.

The very experiences bound up in the recognition effort itself have become a part of what it means to be Nipmuc, even after recognition was denied. The work of repairing relationships damaged in the process was ongoing, and yet, the end to that final appeal in early 2018 cleared the way for other things; it cleared the way for people to be in relationship to their own community on terms of their own choosing rather than as mediated through outside powers' criteria for belonging. It would not be completely possible to escape widely circulating social models of identity—including racial formations—but Nipmucs have long contended with these and built community and connection across these dividing lines and according to their own understandings of their identities.

Though Nipmuc people continue to grapple with the legacy of the decades spent pursuing federal acknowledgment, for the people I spoke with the final determination did not change their understanding of themselves as Nipmuc people. This despite the performative nature of the “final determination,” in which the decision of the government is meant to confer a status, to create a social fact. Anthropologists have noted the reputational stakes of making declarations that rely on, or cite, a certain authority (Goodman et al. 2014; Eisenlohr 2006). When such declarations are accepted, it has a reinforcing effect on the authority behind them. When an authority's determination is rejected, however, this rejection can diminish the legitimacy of that authority on the subject under discussion. Even as certain organizations and institutions continue to cite

Nipmucs' lack of federally acknowledged status as a reason to exclude them from certain settings, the failure of the federal government to acknowledge Nipmuc Nation despite Nipmucs' state-recognized status, active involvement in Indian affairs in Massachusetts, and ongoing involvement in intertribal activity in the region also represents a risk to the authority of the federal government, and the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) in particular. The process has long been the subject of critique, and the Nipmuc case provides more fodder for challenges that the process draws on racist concepts and racist historical sources (Thee 2006; Gould 2013).

Among most of the Nipmuc people with whom I spoke, it was not their own people who had lost credibility with the negative final determination; it was the federal authorities who made the determination. One person spoke about being non-federally recognized as an advantage, granting flexibility and removing Indigenous people from the rules, strictures, and oversight that came with federal involvement. Several of my interlocutors spoke about how they looked forward to moving on from federal recognition and getting back to their own priorities, to serving their community in a variety of ways and reconstituting relationships with those who had been estranged due to disenrollment. At least one person questioned aloud what the need was for a tribal business council for a non-federally recognized tribe, thinking about how getting outside the federal structure gave flexibility of form that federally recognized groups lacked. Many expressed relief that the process was over. When I asked one interviewee what was next, thinking of what else is going on with the tribe in the wake of the end to the bid for recognition, she replied, "We're done."

"We're done," I repeated back, and she hammered the point home,

“We’re done, done, done, done, done. That’s my understanding. Thank God.” The tribe was not done with other projects and they weren’t done with their relationships with each other, but when it came to the federal acknowledgment process, there was a sense that its ending was long overdue. This was a sentiment shared even by those who’d had some positive experiences during the recognition. In discussions about recognition at that point, there was an underlying current of, as one person put it, “Can we please just be done with this?”

CHAPTER 6

CONSTRUCTING SAMI IDENTITY AS ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITY: SAMI NATIONAL DAY AND NORWAY AS A LAND OF “TWO PEOPLES”

Whereas in the ethnoracial models Nipmuc people confront race is a dominating concept, in contemporary Norway, Sami difference is much more often understood as a predominantly ethnic difference, even as it is understood to be inextricable from descent (Valkonen 2014). In this chapter, I examine the articulation of Sami ethnonational identities on Sami National Day (*Samenes nasjonaldag*), an official flag day in Norway, in comparison with the articulation of Norwegian ethnonational identities on Norway's national day, Constitution Day or the 17th of May (*søttende mai*). I utilize my outsider's perspective, as a non-Norwegian and non-Sami ethnographer, to examine how these celebrations turn on highly naturalized metapragmatic models, linking an event, emblems, and models of personhood (Silverstein 1993; Wortham 2006; Rosa 2019). The celebration of Sami National Day is itself an outgrowth of the official recognition of the Sami as Indigenous people of Norway, beginning in the 1980s. In this chapter, however, I analyze this event for what it can illuminate about the foundational logics that structure the social recognizability of Sami identities in Norway today. Because these widespread ontologies organize the perception and construal of Sami identities, they create the conditions for how Sami people experience the reception of their identities by others, a constitutive element of their experiences of their own Indigeneity.

The creation of a parallel between Sami and Norwegian identities through respective national day celebrations is a key example of the adequation of Sami and

Norwegian identities as parallel ethnonational formations that differ in their particulars but are legible according to the same metasemiotic scheme (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 383–384; Agha 2007, 272). In these events, Sami and Norwegian ethnonational identities are both produced as similar on one level (they are constructed as complementary ethnonationalisms) and distinct on another (each has its own, distinct ethnonational emblems that fulfill the demands of requirements of a common metasemiotic scheme). Ultimately, I argue that the parallel constructed between Norwegian and Sami “peoples”—through a combination authoritative, mass mediated metasemiotic discourse and through participatory, ritual-like, multichannel events—constitutes a key difference between the position of the Sami in Norway and Indigenous peoples in many other national contexts.

Outline of the Chapter

I begin this chapter with a brief note on the existing literature on Sami and Norwegian national days, in particular, and on Sami ethnicity more generally, explaining where this chapter makes a distinct contribution. Next, I provide a brief historical background addressing the origins of the two national days I will examine in the chapter. Then I shift to detailed descriptions of the celebration of Norwegian National Day in Oslo in 2018 and Sami National Day in Tromsø in 2016, constructed from ethnographic fieldwork in Norway.¹⁴⁸ I use thick description to not just describe these two events but to

¹⁴⁸ For more detail on the range of ways that these events are celebrated and the rules and organizational committees by which they are governed (especially in the case of Constitution Day), see the existing literature. Blehr (1999b) is especially useful for Constitution Day and Olsen and Sollid (2019) provide a sense of how Sami National Day is celebrated/observed in schools, which are main sites for such events and distinct from the city hall program in Tromsø (which is also addressed in a master’s thesis by Kharina 2013).

simultaneously interpret them in terms of the significant and complex cultural meanings underpinning the particulars of the scene (Geertz 1973).¹⁴⁹ Thick description is followed by my analysis of how each of the two events fulfills the implicit criteria of a common metasemiotic scheme, which organizes certain signs according to a particular idea of the relationship between ethnicity, nationality, and peoplehood. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the implications of the creation of this parallel for the legibility of the Sami as a nation among their fellow Norwegians. In the conclusion to the chapter, I link the construction of complementary ethno-nations, founded on some of the same core cultural models, to the “success” of the Sami political project of achieving formal state recognition in Norway as compared to Indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world (Saugestad 2012b, 5; Lien 2018, 12).

Existing Literature and Historical Background

Many scholars have written on the formal measures for the recognition of the Sami that have followed from the Sami movement’s successes from the 1970s on (Nystad 1995; Broderstad et al. 1999; Minde 1999; Falch et al. 2016; Josefsen et al. 2016; and Falch and Selle 2019 are just a few). Other scholars have taken up the question of Sami recognizability as an ethnic group, a people, or an ethnoracial category (Eidheim 1989; Sara 1995; Dankertsen 2006, 2019; and Kemi Gjerpe 2013, among others). In this chapter, I attempt to provide an account of the relationship between the widespread *social* recognition of Sami as an Indigenous and ethnonational group and the political forms of recognition the Sami people have received in Norway. I demonstrate that political

¹⁴⁹ For further methodological explanation of thick description see Luhrmann (2015).

recognition depends a particular comprehension of Sami distinctiveness while, at the same time, outcomes of political recognition—here, the celebration of Sami National Day—have provided additional opportunities for showcasing Sami distinctiveness in ways that are readily comprehensible to Norwegian national publics. Scholars of Sami and Norwegian history have already pointed out that Sami nationalism emerged in response to Norwegian nationalism during the early 20th century (Zachariassen 2012; Lien 2018). In this chapter, I follow up on that history in the present by demonstrating how Sami and Norwegian nationalism are articulated through use of the same metasemiotic schemes, with different-yet-comparable emblems fulfilling the stipulations of the scheme.

Norway's national day, the 17th of May, has been the subject of several studies of nationalism, ritual, and civil religion (Blehr 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Damsgaard 2013; Botvar 2021).¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Sami National Day has been the subject of fewer studies. With the exception of student work (Kharina 2013), Sami National Day *in schools*, rather than in society more broadly, has been the focus of the existing work (Olsen and Sollid 2019). Both national days have frequently been addressed in terms of their ritual elements (Blehr 1999b; Botvar 2021; Olsen and Sollid 2019). Norwegian researchers have noted the similarities between how the two national days are celebrated (Olsen and Sollid 2019, 133), but such parallels have not yet formed the explicit object of study in research

¹⁵⁰ Of these, I have only consulted Blehr (1999a, 1999b) and Botvar (2021) in the preparation of this chapter. (For further detail on the findings that inform Botvar (2021) see Botvar et al. (2016), published in Norwegian.) Due to constraints of time, I did not have the opportunity to acquire copies of and read the Swedish and Danish texts (my primary fluency in reading Scandinavian languages is in Norwegian). I hope to read Blehr (2000) and Damsgaard (2013) in advance of revising this chapter for publication. Other scholarship that involves but does not focus on Constitution Day includes Gullestad (2002), which I do cite in this chapter.

examining how these holidays help to produce Sami-ness and Norwegian-ness as two complementary (ethno)nationalities.

Sami ethnicity itself has been a noted element of scholarly literature about and by Sami people for many years. Ethnicity is a primary way of conceptualizing social difference and for thinking about nations in Norway (Gullestad 2002, 60). In fact, one of the most influential anthropological theorists on ethnic distinction, Frederick Barth, was Norwegian and a key founding figure in Norwegian anthropology (Eriksen 2016; Eriksen and Jakoubek 2018).¹⁵¹ Barth's (1969) best-known work focused on how people create ethnic distinction through distinct practices and their awareness of the distinctiveness of their practices from those of ethnic others. One of Barth's students, Harald Eidheim, was among the most influential ethnographers working among Sami people during the rise of the political and cultural mobilizations of the second half of the 20th century that are so critical to the investigation in the present dissertation (Thuen and Ramstad 2005; Williksen et al. 2013; Wæhle 2020). A number of contemporary scholars have followed in Eidheim's footsteps in focusing on what he called "Sami idioms" (emblems of Sami identity) and in studying the meaning of Sami ethnic identity to Sami people themselves (Kemi Gjerpe 2013; Valkonen 2014; Dankertsen 2006, 2019; Saugestad 2012b; Thuen 2012).

In much of this literature, ethnicity is taken for granted as an indispensable social category for informing both social science and social life. Some recent anthropological scholarship does displace ethnicity as the natural frame through which to understand Sami identity by focusing on the difference between the elaboration of a universalistic

¹⁵¹ See also Gullestad's (1997, 35) argument on how the orientation to consensus as a Norwegian and his argument about ethnic categories being defined by their boundaries not their content.

Sami ethnos as compared to the other, less categorical, means by which forms of Sami belonging are conceptualized (Díaz de Rada 2015). Such analyses are useful for denaturalizing the notion of ethnicity, showing that it not the only frame through which Sami people relate to one another. However, they do not touch upon why such a “universal ethnos” might be elaborated by Sami people within the context of Norway, in particular, or indeed, within Europe more generally. By placing the case of the Sami in Norway in juxtaposition to the situation of Indigenous peoples in the United States, this dissertation seeks to denaturalize the taken-for-granted premises that structure the production of internal similarity within social categories and difference between them in each of these two contexts. I aim to show, in part, what is particular about the position of and investment in ethnonational formations within Norway. For that reason, I begin this chapter with a brief history of the origins of first the Norwegian and then the Sami national days that form the focus of the ethnographic analyses to follow.

History of Norwegian Constitution Day, the 17th of May

Today, the Norwegian national day is celebrated over much of the country in much the same way with breakfasts among family and friends, followed by parades and church services (Botvar 2021). Across the country, an average of seven in ten people surveyed by Botvar (2021, 206) participate in the public events held on this day, and nine in ten observe the holiday in some form, public or private. Its history stretches back to the 19th century but its significance in Norway is ongoing. While Botvar provides a numerical sense of the widespread participation in the celebrations, Gullestad (2002, 56)

provides some sense of how people understand the day's significance through their own reflexive characterizations, including as “the most Norwegian” of all days.

The holiday has a history longer than Norwegian independence. It marks the creation of the Norwegian constitution (*Grunnloven*) in 1814, during what was ultimately an unsuccessful bid for Norwegian national independence. Parades and other forms of public observation of Norwegian Constitution Day trace back to late 18th century when Norway was still in a union with Sweden. During that period, the 17th of May was an arena for showcasing political opinions, those of political parties as related to suffrage, temperance, and other issues of the day (Blehr 1999, 177). When Norway achieved independence in 1905, there followed a brief period of consensus, during which the holiday was the subject of celebration rather than being a contest over political causes. After this brief lull, however, the 17th of May increasingly became a focal point for conflict. Some among the working class saw the day as a “bourgeois celebration” and boycotted the day (Blehr 1999, 177). Today, by contrast, controversy or political conflict is deliberately sidelined from the parades and public events or is limited to the contributions of adolescents playing a very specific role in questioning societal expectations (see Blehr 1999). Only after the German occupation (1940–1945) did Norwegian Constitution Day take on the distinct form it still has today, albeit without all the features that characterize it today. In at least some localities, the uniformity of dress that characterized these events since at least the 1990s comes as a departure from the patterns of the 1970s (Eriksen 2004, 276–277). Continuity in form is evident across synchronic accounts stretching from the 1990s (Blehr 1999) to more recent years (Botvar 2021 and my own fieldwork in 2016–2019).

History of Sami National Day, the 6th of February

Sami National Day came about in the wake of the Norwegian state's recognition of the Sami and Indigenous people of Norway. Today, the national day is a venue for making perceivable the existence of a Sami nation, and is therefore a key window into how specific criterial signs comprise social models of Sami identity. However, it is also true that its historical origins make Sami national day, as an official "flag day" in Norway, an (eventual) outcome of the state recognition of the Sami and the success of Sami organizing for recognition on a Pan-Sami scale.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the introduction of a range of measures recognizing the Sami in Norway. In 1988, the "Sami paragraph" (*sameparagrafen*) (originally *Grunnloven* § 110a, later *Grunnloven* § 108, as of 2014) was added to the Norwegian constitution, an important sign of the official recognition of the Sami by the state (Skogvang 2021b). A year later, the Sami Act came into effect, establishing the parity of the Norwegian and Sami languages in Norway and establishing the Sami Parliament of Norway. In 1989, Norway became the first country in the world to ratify the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 1989), a marked difference from Norway's response to the first ILO convention on Indigenous and tribal peoples in the 1950s, at which time Norway had declined to ratify the convention on the grounds that no such groups existed in the country.

Sami National Day was founded at a Sami conference in Helsinki, Finland in 1992. The date February 6th was chosen to commemorate the first international pan-Sami political meeting in Trondheim in 1917, which began on that date and represented an

important moment in the articulation of Sami nationalism.¹⁵² Sami National Day was first celebrated in Norway in 1993 in areas with a Sami population; however, it was not until 1999 that the Sami flag was, for the first time, raised outside of a public building on February 6th (outside the city hall in Alta, the largest town in what was then the county of Finnmark, today in Troms-Finnmark). Lien (2018, 3–4) has described the controversy around that act, including debates in the newspapers in which people questioned whether it was going too far to raise the Sami flag on February 6th.

During the first decades that the 6th of February was celebrated in Norway, it had been widely called *Samefolkets Dag*, “[the] Sami Peoples’ Day,” even though the Sami name for the holiday, *Sámi álbmotbeaivvi* (North Sami), is best translated as *Samisk nasjonaldag*, which, in English means “Sami National Day” (Lien 2018; Olsen and Sollid 2019, 118). Though controversies over the connection between the day and Sami nationalism date to 1999, Sami National Day did not become an official flag day in the whole of Norway until 2003 (Davidsen 2019; Olsen and Sollid 2019, 118), and Sami leaders did not press the issue of the name until even later on. When the national broadcaster, NRK, began to use the term *samenes nasjonaldag* in 2013, a local man in Alta reported the media outlet to the police. Even though the case was dismissed by the police, the man took his grievance to the local newspaper on February 6, 2014 (Lien 2018, 4). He, and others who opposed the use of the name *Samenes nasjonaldag* but not *Samefolkets dag* made a link between nationality and sovereignty, claiming that nationality necessarily entailed sovereignty, echoing the logic that had been used to argue for Norwegian national independence at the turn of the 20th century.

¹⁵² See Lien (2011, 2018) and Zachariassen (2012) on the meeting in Trondheim.

The shift to calling the holiday *Samenes nasjonaldag* was not so unprecedented as critics made it out to be.¹⁵³ At the Helsinki meeting back in 1992, the new holiday was originally called *Sámi álbmotbeaivvi* (North Sami), best translated as *Samisk nasjonaldag*, which means “Sami National Day” (Lien 2018; Olsen and Sollid 2019, 118). And, as the Norwegian Sami Parliament has taken pains to point out in more recent years, at the very beginning, the Swedish translation of the declaration from Helsinki had used the concept of a “national day” (*nasjonaldag*) (Sametinget 2021). Even when called Sami National Day, the February 6th national day does not have parity with Constitution Day, the Norwegian National Day. While the latter is holiday, with closures of workplaces and schools, a “flag day” in Norway is a day that is “marked” by the raising of a flag and may entail celebrations but is not a holiday in the sense of a day off from work and school.

In the decades since the introduction of the official February 6th flag day in Norway, there have developed general patterns to how Sami National Day is observed, generally centered around a public program including speeches or lectures, concerts, and an official ceremony “marking” the day.¹⁵⁴ As Olsen and Sollid (2019) have pointed out, schools have become a primary venue for the commemoration or celebration of this day. However, in a number of places, events are also organized in other public spaces. In this chapter, I analyze the official events for the 6th of February that are organized at the City Hall in Tromsø each year. I intend this analysis to supplement Olsen and Sollid’s (2019)

¹⁵³ See Lien (2018,3–4) on supposed “*sniksamifisering*” (“Sneak-samification”).

¹⁵⁴ In Norwegian, these are referring to as *markeringer* or *merkinger*, terms that come from the verb for “to mark.” The closest term in English is a “commemoration” of a particular day, but that term gives substantially more emphasis to the remembrance of the past, rather than the marking of a day as special in the present and on the annual calendar. Because I primarily address the cases that Olsen and Sollid (2019) would classify as celebrations (*feiring*), I primarily use that term in this chapter.

analysis of the ways that Sami National Day is observed in schools in other towns in Northern Norway. In much the way that the celebration of the 17th of May in Oslo represents a ritual center for Norwegian nationalism, the celebration of the 6th of February in Tromsø, the Norwegian city with the greatest number of Sami residents (iTromsø 2019) and an important place in the history of Sami political achievements and scholarly expertise (see Chapter 7), represents an important site for the articulation of contemporary Sami (ethno)national identity.

Enacting Ethnonational Identities: (Re)producing Sami and Norwegian Nations
Through the Celebration of National Days

The 17th of May in Oslo, 2018

First, to Oslo. I begin with the Norwegian national day because, unlike Sami National Day, the 17th of May is familiar to virtually all inhabitants of Norway. According to survey data, nine out of ten Norwegians observe the holiday in some way, with seven of ten participating in public events hosted on that day. Oslo is the political capital and home to many of those institutions where the idea of the nation itself—the Norwegian “imagined community” (Anderson 1991)—is produced and reproduced. It is also the site the Folk Museum, the Fram Museum (about Norwegians’ involvement in polar exploration), the National Historic Museum, the World War II Museum (and the very harbor where the Germans invaded the country by surprise in 1940), and the museum of art where Munch’s *Scream* hangs.

The iconic painting is known to foreigners for its rendering of desperation, but Norwegians also know that the backdrop to the photo is a view over Oslo from the hills to the east of the city, captured as its subject clings to the rail on the long uphill climb. From that vantage point, one can see the old Akershus Fortress on the harbor front and the towering city hall with its art deco clock face. Behind the city hall, only a short walk away, is Stortinget, the Norwegian Parliament, which stands opposite the royal palace, the two serving as bookends to a park that extends in a stripe of green between the two parallel streets. Along the park on one side, a bookstore, an old hotel, and a Hard Rock Café, often blaring metal music, populate the final stretch of Carl Johans Gate, named for the first Swedish King of Norway after the establishment of a degree of home rule under the Norwegian constitution (*Grunnloven*) in 1814.

That occasion, the 1814 drafting of *Grunnloven*, the Norwegian constitution is today celebrated in Norway in a form that parallels how many other countries would celebrate an independence day.¹⁵⁵ It is celebrated all across the country, but there's an argument to be made that Oslo, where the celebrations feature a parade through the city streets, past the parliament building, and ending in front of the royal palace, acts as a kind of ritual center for the reproduction of the Norwegian nation both generally, though peoples' interactions with the set of institutions I outlined above in introducing the city and especially on the 17th of May, when central Oslo becomes the stage for celebration of the modern Norwegian nation.¹⁵⁶ During my first few years in the country, friends and

¹⁵⁵ Norway would not become a fully independent sovereign nation until much later, in 1905, when the union with Sweden ended. See Elgenius's (2011) comparison of Norwegian Constitution Days with other European national days.

¹⁵⁶ I use the term "ritual center" in the sense it is employed by Rosa (2019, 108), that is to say for its role as a particularly potent site in the reproduction of particular figures of personhood and the metasemiotic schemes that authorize those figures as significant, often unavoidable, social facts.

colleagues asked me repeatedly if I had ever been in Oslo for the 17th of May, not *in Norway* for that day, but *in Oslo*, highlighting the centrality of that one place in the whole country's connection to the holiday.¹⁵⁷

In May of 2018, I had been living in Oslo since November of the previous year, working on historical research on the development of Norwegian policies on the Sami question as a visiting researcher at the University of Oslo and learning Norwegian at an intensive language program downtown. That year, beautiful summery weather arrived just in time for the big national holiday. Groups of children marched in formation past the street where my apartment was located, not far from the university.¹⁵⁸ On the afternoon of May 16th, a marching band rehearsed on Marcel Moes Vei. Its brass and drums were the loudest thing I'd ever heard in my neighborhood.¹⁵⁹ Despite being quite central to one of the city's main transportation hubs, on Sundays, the air hung so still and quiet in our neighborhood that we could hear bells tolling in the churchyard blocks away. All the extra bustle on the streets in the days leading up to the seventeenth built up a feeling of anticipation.

From the press coverage and photographs I'd seen of previous years' celebrations, and talk about the holiday among office mates, I knew the general format. I was familiar

¹⁵⁷ Botvar (2021, 6) also points out the significance of the observation of the national day in Oslo, even as he chooses to focus on events in other localities in his study.

¹⁵⁸ My neighbor, who had two young daughters, explained that the youngest children do not march in the parade on the big day, but they practice on the days leading up to the 17th so that they don't feel left out and to give them a chance to practice for future years when they will become part of the centerpiece of the spectacle. See Blehr (1999b) for further context on the role of children in the parades on the 17th of May (at least during the 1990s).

¹⁵⁹ This was an upper class and very white neighborhood. See Connor (2019) on "regimes of hearing" in Oslo and the association of immigrants with and Norwegians with quiet, for how even this quietude carries meaning. See also the novel *Tante Ulrikkes vei* by Zeshan Shakar (2017) for an interpretation of what "immigrant" (those born in Norway are still sometimes talked about as "*innvandrere*") communities might think of the noise of 17th of May brass bands.

with elements of the genre of the event and the expectations about behavior and appearance associated with it.¹⁶⁰ People dressed up for the holiday, either in dressy clothes, suits for the men and dresses in fine fabrics for the women, or in “national dress.”¹⁶¹ For Norwegians, that means *bunad*, meticulous reproductions of what would have been peoples’ best finery in the early nineteenth century. Long dark or richly colored dresses for the women over fine, blousy white wool shirts and knee-length pants, stockings, vests, and coats for men.¹⁶² For an American, this kind of getup would be a costume, but Norwegians explained to me that a real *bunad* is not a costume, it is national dress. A bunad had to follow close specifications that, historically, have been researched, documented, and controlled by a state authority under the Ministry of Culture, though today this work is done by *Norsk institutt for bunad og folkedrakt* (“The Norwegian Institute for Traditional Dress,” my translation).¹⁶³ The way the details of Norwegian national dress are researched and regimented through institutions of expertise is not unlike the way that some European nations research, care for, and curate their languages through institutions like the well-known *Real Academia Española* (Spanish Royal Academy) or *Académie Française* (French Academy) or the less well known, but similar Norwegian *Språkrådet* (Language Council).¹⁶⁴ Though it is an “institution” of a different

¹⁶⁰ This is to say I was familiar with the metapragmatic stereotypes about the 17th of May through exposure to metadiscourse about the event as a part of my own biographical history of socialization, to put it in Agha’s (2007) terms.

¹⁶¹ In Norwegian, the word used to describe the whole genre of dress is *folkedrakt*; in English, Norwegians use “national dress” as a translation for this word.

¹⁶² To an American like me, they looked like a more refined and more authentic versions of an Oktoberfest outfit or the original label for the St. Pauli Girl beer, before it was transformed into a cartoon caricature. In Norwegian, the word *bunad*, when used in the plural, is *bunader*. However, I noticed in the conversations I had with bilingual native speakers of Norwegian that when speaking about the dress in English, they simply used *bunad* rather than making the plural form. I cannot be certain that practice is universal, but I follow it here where I use the Norwegian lexical item since it has no English equivalent.

¹⁶³ See the institute’s webpage: <https://bunadogfolkedrakt.no/>.

¹⁶⁴ See Cavanaugh and Shankar (2014) on the construction of authenticity through linguistic and material work. Similar processes are at work in the production of “authentic” *bunad*. Taking up this topic in full is

kind—an institution in the sense of a regular, even ritual-like event (Bell 1997)—the celebration of 17th of May, too, serves an important role in reproducing Norwegian nationhood. It provides a major occasion for the use of bunad in public settings (they are worn on other occasions: confirmations, weddings, and so on).



Figure 1: An ice cream advertisement at a bus stop just outside the city of Tromsø features ice cream cones dressed up for the 17th of May. The capture reads “Dressed up for party,” where the same word, *pyntet*, means “dressed up” and “decorated,” as in decorating for a holiday. (Photo by the author, 2019)

regrettably beyond the scope of this chapter, though I will note that similar processes (and in some cases laws) govern assurances of authenticity in the production of both Sami and Native American art and crafts. Eriksen’s (2004, 274–277) account stresses that commercialization and politicization of the *bunad* go hand in hand.

My 17th of May experience was institutionally mediated on one further level; instead of attending a breakfast at the home of friends or family members, in May of 2018, I woke up in the morning to get ready to attend the 17th of May breakfast that the University of Oslo (UiO) was hosting for international researchers. Rather of being held on the central campus at Blindern, nearby where I was living, the breakfast was to be held in the city center at the campus of the law school, which is within seeing distance from royal palace on one side and Stortinget on the other. Hunter, my partner and also an American, was coming with me. We both struggled over what to wear. I settled on a black dress and he wore the most formal thing he'd brought to Oslo, dark jeans and a plaid flannel shirt. I joked with him that if people thought it was too informal, he could tell them it was his "national dress" as a New Englander.¹⁶⁵ To get there, we left early in the morning for the metro station to catch the first train heading into town.

As we walked out into the sunlight, our neighbors were leaving the building too. The parents of the young family were a pair of academics, originally from Venezuela, who had recently moved to Oslo from Canada, arriving in Oslo not long before we had. The husband/father was waiting by the driveway, in dark red ironed slacks and a crisp white shirt and shiny dark leather dress shoes. Over his heart he wore a red, white, and blue ribbon pinned to his shirt. He had done a couple of years of high school in Norway and knew how to dress the part for this day. We stopped to chat with him, asking about

¹⁶⁵ Indeed, L.L.Bean gear like that flannel shirt might be the closest thing to "national dress" for white people in New England. Much of what the "outfitter" sells is self-consciously New England themed; alongside neo-colonial architecture, it forms one more everyday expression of colonial legacies in the region that are not often conceptualized as such but are instead read as class emblems (longstanding forms of distinction in Bourdieu's [1984] sense).

plans for the big day. Soon, we were joined by their youngest daughter, still in *barnehage* (Norwegian kindergarten), who was dressed in a ruffled white dress, and the mom, last to emerge from the apartment, wearing khakis, a cardigan, and a t-shirt. The t-shirt was dark blue and the cardigan maroon, her own interpretation of Norwegian blue, white, and red. They explained that they were heading to a friend's house for the traditional breakfast, and the older daughter, missing from the threesome that morning, would be in the children's parade.¹⁶⁶ I said, "We'll look for her!" and they told me she was wearing the same sort of outfit as the younger girl, which they described as the Venezuelan "national dress."

Our neighbors walked away down the street and Hunter and I headed in the opposite direction, cutting through campus to the metro stop. As soon as we neared the platform, I started to see more people out for the morning. I had expected the people to be dressed in bunad but even so, the contrast between the sleek modernity of the train and the old-fashioned outfits formed a puzzling contrast. I couldn't help but overhear a conversation in English between two women who looked to be in their early twenties, the student-aged demographic that was so common at that metro stop. Otherwise, the train car was just as quiet as on a usual morning.¹⁶⁷

We arrived at National Theatre station and came up into the little courtyard with the fountain that looks like a dandelion gone to seed. Already things were bustling, with so many people in bunad walking around, metal crowd control barriers set up along the

¹⁶⁶ See Blehr (1999a) on the breakfast and the children's parade and their place in the schedule for the day, shared by families all over the country.

¹⁶⁷ See Berggreen (1993) on this practice of quiet in enclosed public spaces in Norway—archetypally an elevator or a train car. See also Connor (2019) on contrasts *qualia* of quiet and noise in the context of Oslo classrooms where migrant students encounter Norwegian norms, values, and meanings.

sides of the street leading up to the palace, and people already beginning to line up loosely along Carl Johans Gate. We walked toward the green space, next to the UiO law school building. The tall black iron gate was open, but the only people going in or out seemed to be concession workers. Looking for a clue, I spotted another person walking toward a stone building with an open door, and we followed after.

We found ourselves inside a spiffily renovated old horse stable, where we ate a breakfast of salad, roast beef, and potato chips on paper plates and listened to a series of speakers from the university administration tell us about the 17th of May. The final speaker, a middle-aged university official in a red bunad, told us he heard about this event just yesterday and he had to come down because of how excited he was about sharing this day with international colleagues. What he liked about the 17th of May, he explained, was that Norwegians focused on children. To him, it was notable that the military is not the main focus of the parade in Norway; the centerpiece is the children. “Children are our future,” he told us, and he wrapped up the event by encouraging us to go out and get a place on the street to see the children’s parade.¹⁶⁸

The parade was impressive, a seemingly endless stream of children marching in formation up to the foot of the palace where the royal family stood on a balcony and waved down at the them. Onlookers packed either side of the street, many of them—though more women than men—in *bunad*. People ate ice cream and hot dogs and bought

¹⁶⁸ Blehr (1999b), who has written most extensively on Norwegian Constitution Day, also highlights this element early in her article. It is not impossible that the speaker had read this and that Blehr’s contribution helped to reify the importance of children’s involvement. Though my account is from just over two decades after Blehr’s observations, many of the elements of the event were quite similar to before. Batvor (2021) provides a characterization of changes over time developed from a statistical study. Gullestad’s (2002) analysis of the linkages between metaphors of family and home with Norwegian nationalism and the marginalization of immigrants in Norwegian society raises doubts about this feel good message coming from the representative of the university.

little paper cups of hot coffee from vendors in nearby green spaces. Among the stream of children I spotted a young boy, perhaps six, in a bright blue *gákti*, the Sami national dress, and pointed boots. Otherwise, I saw some Asian traditional clothes that I couldn't place, on both teachers and students, and a lot of Norwegian *folkedrakt*. Onlookers and children exchanged shouts of “*Hipp, hipp—Hurrah!*” and called out to and waved to people they knew in the parade. Two police officers in dress uniform watched over the scene, ostensibly monitoring traffic; people crossed the street at intervals anyhow, right in the middle of the parade, to meet up with friends or family on the other side.



Figure 2: 17th of May children's parade on Carl Johans Gate, with the palace of the Norwegian royal family in the background (photo by the author, 2018)

After the parade was over, we wandered up to the park behind the palace. There, families took photos with a baby at the pond, ducks and ducklings swimming in the background. Another little girl chased a pigeons, and signing drunk men caroused down one of the gravel paths and off toward the Frogner neighborhood. We followed them and stopped at a coffee shop where people sipped coffee and ate ice cream outside in the sunshine.

What I didn't see at all the whole time we were downtown was any Sami flags. I was primed to look for them by a prior conversation with a Sami friend about the controversy surrounding the use of the Sami flag on the 17th of May. The number of Norwegian flags, by contrast, especially during the parade, was truly astounding. Red, blue, and white ribbons were tied in little girls' hair and pinned to lapels; one even adorned the collar of a black miniature poodle outside a coffee spot in Frogner. Children called out the colors—red, blue, and white—in one of the songs they sang as they marched, one of only a few with lyrics.

On our way back home, headed westbound on the T-bane, we had plenty of company, people heading home from the festivities in the center. Though full, the train was not rambunctious like it had the early hours of January first when we made our way home after Oslo's New Year's Eve fireworks. When we got back to the apartment at Duehaugveien, there were people out singing and playing yard games at the house across the street from ours. In half a year, I had almost never seen anyone at that house. (Only once, had I glimpsed someone, momentarily, through an upstairs window as she opened it briefly, then closed it.) In the afternoon sunshine and with such a buzz of activity all around, it felt like a different Oslo. Hunter and I went for a walk through Ullevål Hageby,

a nearby neighborhood of houses with tiled roofs and manicured gardens, where we saw so many people sitting out at folding tables in their yards. Many of them were in the middle of dinner parties, with wine glasses and all. Others, having finished with dinner, sat there enjoying the sunlight before it began to fade into evening.

The 6th of February in Tromsø, 2016

Though the university official had suggested that, in his mind, the closest parallel to the Norwegian 17th of May parade would be a military parade in some other nation, from my US frame of reference that comparison didn't click. While they typically feature plenty of red, white, and blue, American national holidays that involve parades and even explicit military participation have nothing in the way of "national dress"—unless American flag t-shirts and cutoff jeans count within that category. When I attended my first 17th of May celebrations in Oslo, I was reminded instead of the most similar event I had ever attended, which was also in Norway, though as far north of Oslo as Oslo is north of Rome. I thought of the 6th of February celebrations I had attended in the small city of Tromsø, Norway's "Paris of the North."¹⁶⁹

When I first travelled to Norway in 2016, I arrived into the dark of the northern winter, arriving in January just a few days after the sun returns to that latitude but before the it rises high enough into the sky to crest the jagged peaks that surround the low-lying island of Tromsøya. This island, warmed by the gulf stream ocean currents that embrace it on all sides, and sheltered from the worst of stormy weather by the mountains that

¹⁶⁹ With a population of 77,000 the city of Tromsø is still one of the five largest in Norway, though small by comparison to many of countries' most populous cities (Thorsnæs and Svendsen 2021).

encircle it, has been inhabited for thousands of years, with coexistence between Sami and Scandinavian inhabitants characterizing much of its more recent deep history (Thorsnæs and Svendsen 2021). During my fieldwork, Tromsø, where I was hosted as a visiting researcher at the Centre for Sami Studies at UiT, was my home base during all but the eight months in 2017–2018 when I was based in Oslo. Years before I had ever seen the children’s parade to the palace on the 17th of May, I made my way, in the company of Sami Centre colleagues, to Tromsø’s city hall for the celebration of the 6th of February, Sami National Day.

Like the 17th of May, people sometimes called the Sami National Day by its date: *sjette februar*, the 6th of February. A Sami friend shared with me that, in her view, using this term could be a way to avoid picking one of the two different ways of saying the name of the holiday in Norwegian (either *Samefolkets dag* or *Samenes nasjonaldag*).¹⁷⁰ Choosing to call the day *sjette februar* (the 6th of February) avoids the direct debate over calling Sami people a “nation” but it also produces a parallel to the only other holiday in Norway routinely called by its calendar day, Norwegian Constitution Day, the 17th of May. The parallel is implicit but because it does not make a clear target of itself in the way the name *Samenes nasjonaldag* declares the stance that the Sami constitute a nation, calling Sami National Day *sjette februar*, or the 6th of February, quietly asserts a parallel between the two celebrations. Discourse *about* the event—the way it is reanalyzed, including how it is named—plays a role in naturalizing certain features of the event; here its national-ness.

¹⁷⁰ My friend, who was critical of the use of *Samefolkets dag* (Sami People’s Day), used Sami National Day and 6th of February interchangeably. I follow that pattern throughout this paper, especially because I am writing in English, and Sami National Day is by far the more commonly used name in that language.

Similar implicit parallels characterize the enactment of the celebrations (pragmatics) as well as how people talk name them (reflexive reanalysis; metasemiotic discourse). From an insider perspective, the two celebrations differ importantly, yet the parallel, too, is noted. Olsen and Sollid (2019, 133) even go so far as to say it is possible that the 17th of May serves as a “role model” for Sami National Day.

In Tromsø, the city hosts a weeklong event during the week of February 6th. During “Sami Week,” different venues across the city—the museum, the student event space downtown, the local independent theatre, the cultural house (*kulturhuset*), among others—host events about Sami people, culture, politics, sports, crafts, fashion, music, art, and more. Some of these events are overtly targeted, at least in part, toward tourists who will understand only the most stereotypic elements of the events, but many are also oriented toward local Sami people’s own participation.¹⁷¹ The events hosted during Sami Week range from reindeer races down a snowy tract set up in the heart of the city center to scholarly panels, and music performances and events featuring Sami crafts, both for exhibition and for sale.

¹⁷¹ Sami Week is run by MSM, the company that originated organizing the Midnight Sun Marathon and now runs several major events aimed toward international attendees in Tromsø each year. During the time of my fieldwork in 2016–2019, and through the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, tourism was a growing part of the economy in northern Norway; Tromsø in particular had seen a tourist boom in both winter (for northern lights tourism, skiing, and Sami cultural tourism) and in the summer, largely related to outdoor activities. Some of the events in Sami Week are clearly a part of this tourism boom. For instance, a peak event during the week is the reindeer races that take place on the Saturday of Sami Week each year. The organizers truck in snow to create a race track on the main cobblestone pedestrian street in the city center and competitors from around northern Norway hurtle down the racetrack on skis, pulled by reindeer running the short distance at full speed. The fact that the event is announced in both Norwegian and English gives a clue that it is targeted in part at tourists, and the crowds that line the streets carry bulky DSLR cameras and speak a variety of languages. (Graham [2005] has addressed how tourist events nonetheless have effects for the communities that construct the tourist experiences.) Other events, like a fashion show of Sami handicrafts at the museum, are advertised in the same schedule of events (again available in English as well as Norwegian) but turn out to be attended by people who already know one another and one another’s work, from within the local Sami community in Tromsø, speaking in Norwegian and presenting their latest projects.

Even as they target both local and tourist audiences, these events often feature elements of a widespread ethnic model of identity, in which a range of emblems signal Sami-ness. The semiotic range of the model encompasses multiple different sorts of signs, including material things (handicrafts [*duodji*]), associations with other living beings (reindeer), auditory signs (most notably *joik*, a musical genre and cultural practice), as well as Sami national dress and Sami languages. Sami nationhood is understood to be rooted in distinctiveness in domains like craft, subsistence activities, music, and art and to yield protections of those culturally distinctive practices and political rights to self-determination that shape the need for scholarly and public debate on question of Sami political and economic development.

Every Saturday in Tromsø, the university organizes a “Saturday seminar” (*lørdagsseminar*), a public talk for the local community. During Sami Week, the Centre for Sami Studies provides the speaker. I’d already attended as many of the Sami Week events as I could by the time the weekend came around, but in 2016, Saturday also happened to be the 6th of February itself, so as I left my rented room and took the bus down to the city center, I noticed the difference right away. Just as with my later experience on the 17th of May in Oslo, the first tip-off that something was different was that so many people were wearing their *kofter* (*gákti*, North Sami; *gaptah*, South Sami; *gáppte*, Lule Sami). Women wore pleated skirts that snapped bouncily behind them as they walked, and men and women both wore pointed leather shoes wrapped with flat woven wool ties to seal out the winter weather. I was used to a non-stop parade of parkas and ski coats that surrounded me on the everyday streets in Tromsø; clearly, from the

moment I started to make my way through public space, there was something different about this day.

I was headed to meet colleagues from the Centre for Sami Studies at a student events venue in a converted section of an old industrial brewery, where several senior colleagues were presenting a panel on Sami economic development, and more junior colleagues were attending to support them.¹⁷² The two senior colleagues, political scientists who had gotten their start in politics during the Sami movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, wore two quite different *kofter* and distinctive round, Sami brooches they wore to pin their shawls sent off flashes of light that reached to the back of the student lounge where a good-sized audience had gathered to hear an academic presentation on a Saturday. I huddled beside a Canadian Master's student around a small four-seat table to listen to, Katri, a gregarious doctoral candidate at the Centre, whisper an English translation to us. Through the organizers and participants' linguistic choices, this event, like many of the Sami Week events asserted itself as an event for locals, not for tourists and nor primarily for students.¹⁷³

From there, I went with Katri and several of the others to the city hall, where the official *markering* (commemoration, literally, marking) of the day would take place later in the afternoon. The early darkness of northern winter was already descending to a cornflower blue around us, and, as we approached the city hall, its four-story steel and glass atrium was lit up with green lights, just the shade of the northern lights. People of

¹⁷² This name is a reference to the slogan of the university, "The driving force of the north" ("*Drivkraft til nord*"), which suggests vision and leadership as well as power. In a way, given the fact that Norwegian university students are generally young (in their twenties), the location of the lecture in a youth space carries meanings perhaps not unlike those described by Blehr (1999b) for the *russetoget* in the Constitution Day parade.

¹⁷³ Katri is a pseudonym.

all ages in their colorful *gákti* milled around inside. Some set up a soundstage at the front of the atrium, other stood in a line to buy soda, tea, and *biđos*, a Sami reindeer stew. Others were already seated at the cafeteria tables that had been rolled out and lined up across the room, each with two little Sami flags set up at the center of the tables.

Side by side with Katri, I walked through the crowd, over to the line where volunteers were ladling steaming *biđos* into disposable bowls. Katri pointed to different shapes and patterns among the woolen jacket, belts, and dresses. The colors, designs, even the pleats and ruffles and the look of the jewelry communicated something to her about where the person, or their family, was from. This ability to “read” the meanings of the clothes’ details is metapragmatic knowledge (Silverstein 1976; Agha 2007). Katri was able to share her metapragmatic knowledge with me through explicit descriptions. As she did so, she also classified the different communities as belonging to three broader groups, the Lule Sami area, the south Sami area, and northern Sami area.¹⁷⁴ As she rattled off the names of Sami places I had yet to visit and pointed to patterns, she helped me begin to read the meanings of the different patterns in the room, albeit with a much-reduced ability to understand the full context of who was wearing what and what it said about them at a local timescale.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ While these reflect geographic places, they also reflect the main Sami language varieties

¹⁷⁵ She also pointed out some designs that were not traditional, some of them taking full advantage of some of the fancier features—ruffles and bright colors—but combining them in new ways or adding novel touches like metallic fabric or rhinestones or, in the case of one little girl, a whole outfit made of different shades of pink from bubblegum tones to a bright Barbie magenta. In the same way that choosing to say “6th of February” provided an alternative to taking a side on the debate about the holiday’s name, wearing a flamboyantly non-traditional *gákti* offers a way to identify with Saminess but without linking oneself to a particular home-place. Katri alluded to controversy over this trend, and I would find social media debates and NRK Sápmi coverage on the question to be commonplace during my fieldwork. Some took the stance that all *gákti* should be traditional designs, following the official word on what makes a *bunad folkedrakt* and not just *festdrakt*; others embraced the creativity and dedication to the craft of sewing the outfits that the new trend of original designs might alter. In the Sami case, this debate also had the weight of the circumstances of the loss of this way of dress and much of the knowledge about how to sew these clothes, which had subsided during the period of anti-Sami policies and harsh stigma against all things Sami, during

For someone like Katri, who could read the meanings of the different *gákti*,¹⁷⁶ the effect of all those people crammed into the Tromsø city hall would not have been unlike the effect on the streets of Oslo for someone who knows a thing or two about *bunad*; each individual person is identifying themselves as belonging to a particular geographic place through the design of the garments they are wearing; however, by gathering and wearing the clothes in this setting, they are also collectively enacting a Sami nationhood, with all the different communities gathering together as a readily perceivable nation.¹⁷⁷ Their belonging to particular Sami geographic places and to a craft community capable of producing these clothes and understanding their meanings served as a key part of the belonging to a bigger national fellowship. On Sami National Day, the Sami people (*Samefolket*) not just an *imagined* community, as Anderson (1991) has famously described nations as constructed through print capitalism, but an *enacted* one, a nation made real through embodied multi-channel texts composed of concrete perceivable things understandable according to metapragmatic models widely familiar to attendees.

which time many Sami had ceased to wear the distinguishing *gákti*. The Norwegian re-embrace of the *bunad* was not freighted with the same history.

¹⁷⁶ This ability to “read” the meanings of the clothes’ details is metapragmatic knowledge (Silverstein 1976; Agha 2007). Katri was able to share her metapragmatic knowledge with me, helping me to read the meanings of the different patterns in the room. As she did so, she also classified the different communities as belonging to three broader groups, the Lule Sami area, the south Sami area, and northern Sami area. While these reflect geographic places, they also reflect the main Sami language varieties

¹⁷⁷ This is an example of what I mean by a multi-channel text. The collective meaning of all the different signs in the event exceeds the meaning of any one of them alone.



Figure 3: A choir sings at the City Hall event on Sami National Day 2016 in Tromsø, Norway (photo by the author)

The scene in the city hall called upon the senses beyond vision. The senses of taste and smell were recruited into the multi-channel text though the stew. The *biđos* had, of course, been selected for the event precisely because it was a Sami dish, but it had other inherent affordances: where dried reindeer meat or some other selection might have been a sensory experience for only those who consumed it, the scent of the stew became a part of the gatherings' ambience. Sound was the feature not just of one-to-one communication but of the feeling of the room, the crowd, the joy, and the hubbub of the

event. At that early moment in my fieldwork, in 2016, I could understand few of the words, but even I could tell that the attendees at the event spoke in a variety of place-specific Norwegian dialects and some spoke in Sami languages. Surely, if my later experiences can serve to reflect on this earlier one, many of the attendees fluidly shifted between Sami and Norwegian as they milled about the room and connected with different friends and acquaintances who might speak a Sami language or not.¹⁷⁸

Eventually people took their seats and those who could not find seats stood off to the side or on the stairs leading to the city offices on the upper floors of the building. Then the program for the official commemoration or celebration (*marking* or *feiring*, see Olsen and Sollid [2019] on the distinction between these) began, and the sounds of speech were supplanted with song. A children's choir sang first, creating another parallel with the involvement of children front and center in the celebration of the 17th of May, contributing further to the commensurability of the two events. They were succeeded by a choir made of up adults, who sang a few more numbers.¹⁷⁹ Once the choir had finished, the conductor turned around to face the assembled audience and the choir led us through *Sami Soga Lávlla* (North Sami, *Sami Ædnan*, Norwegian), the Sami national song, or—once again, the same sort of alternative exists—*samefolkets sang* (the Sami peoples'

¹⁷⁸ Though I did not learn a Sami language during my fieldwork, I did come to recognize the differences in the sound of Sami languages as compared to Scandinavians, something I came to find even Norwegians raised in Oslo, who had little personal experience with Sami communities, could do. On one long car ride with a friend in her sixties, she recounted to me how she could not understand Sami language, but remembers listening to the Sami Radio broadcasts that ran on NRK, the national broadcaster during her childhood. In telling the story, she added a brief faux-Sami bit of sound in the middle, a nonsense combination of sounds that imitated Sami speech in cadence, tonality, and phonemes, though it did not form actual words. (See Harkness (2014) on how different languages are attributed values and qualities in a very different ethnographic context.)

¹⁷⁹ This is not uncommon at public commemorations of holidays in Norway, in my understanding. I attended a celebration of International Women's Day in Tromsø in 2019 during which a choir of adults sang several numbers, including a rendition of "Bread and Roses" that moved my heart, one small connection between Norway and Massachusetts (the song and the poem on which it was based gained notoriety for its connection to the strike of textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912).

song).¹⁸⁰ I stumbled through my best attempt at the words, reading from a sheet that had been placed on the tables as part of setting up for the event, which listed the lyrics in both Norwegian and Sami languages. The melody had the slow rising harmonies of a 19th century hymn, a tune I still remember. It slotted easily into my memory, alongside hymns from childhood Sundays at a Connecticut congregationalist church. Remembering the moment, the tune and the fullness of the voices echoing in the glass atrium come back to me long after the exact words—about the landscape of Sápmi: *vidda* (the inland steppe), sea, mountains, forests, and rivers—were lost to me.

Effects of These National Days, in Light of One Another

Adequation and Distinction, Within and across Events

Sami National Day and Norwegian Constitution Day are both events in which widespread sociohistoric models of identity are made perceivable. At these events, at least as they are celebrated today, ethnic identities are made salient and differences within those categories, along other possible axes such as class, are sublimated. Linguistic anthropologists Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 383–384) have termed this process “adequation”:

The term adequation denotes both equation and adequacy; the relation thus establishes sufficient sameness between individuals or groups. The relation of adequation suggests that likeness, which as discussed above is often taken to be the basis of identity, is not an objective and permanent state but a motivated social achievement that may have temporary or long-term effects.

¹⁸⁰ This song was created from a poem written by Isak Saba, the early 20th century Sami political leader and first Sami person elected to the Norwegian Parliament. Originally, as detailed in Lien (2018, 7), the song was called “*den samiske slektens sang*” (“the Sami relations’ song”), which was voted as the Sami national song in 1986.

As Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 383) point out in their introduction of the concept, adequation is the basis for the creation—through semiotic processes—of groups from individuals *and* it can also describe the creation of a perceived sameness among groups. Though Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 383) describe adequation and its partner-concept “distinction” (the creation of difference) as “tactics” motivating linguistic acts, following Agha (2007) and Gal and Irvine (2019), I extend this notion beyond utterances to consider semiotic activity more broadly. I also leave behind the idea that the pairs of effects that Bucholtz and Hall describe are best understood as “tactics” (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 383, see Table 1). The authors themselves admit that “the same linguistic act may be understood by speaker, hearer, or other participants as motivated by different tactics, and the tactical outcome may be negotiated by all those involved rather than established in advance” (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 383). Given the ambivalent relation to intention, I consider adequation/distinction, naturalization/denaturalization, and authorization/illegitimation as *effects* rather than as tactics, recognizing that though they can also be deployed with intention, intention is not required to produce the effect.

The celebration of Sami National Day and Norwegian National Day both involved adequation within the ethnic groups that are a key feature of the events. As Blehr (1999) and Gullestad (2002) have pointed out in the case of Norwegian Constitution Day, the way that event is celebrated today pushes political differences to the margin in favor of a celebration of imagined sameness rooted in Norwegian ethnic identity. Stereotypic emblems (signs of identity that are strongly linked to the model of personhood they index) feature prominently in the celebration. Many of these signs (the Norwegian flag, the *bunad*, among others) are so thoroughly naturalized that they are

received as iconic, rather than indexical, which is to say they are taken as resembling the concept indexed rather than just related to it based on a relationship of cooccurrence (Irvine and Gal, 2000). These elements, which form an anticipated component of the celebrations, are drawn from and make perceivable at the national day celebrations, sociohistoric models of ethnic identity that are already widely understood in the Norwegian context. Norway is known—among Norwegians and anthropologists alike—for its discourse about what kinds of actions, settings, activities, foods, and so on are “typically Norwegian” (*typisk norsk*) (Eriksen 1993b) (see Figure 3). The enactments of Norwegian (ethno)national identity on Constitution Day form only one way that ideas about Norwegian-ness are articulated; they are also substantially circulated and reanalyzed through metasemiotic discourse not only about the 17th of May but about a range of other events and practices considered significant to the Norwegian national imaginary.



Figure 4: The May set-up in a rotating display space at the Tromsø public library in May 2019 (photo by the author). The display’s title, when translated to English, reads “Typically Norwegian – not just Norwegian.” The display is composed of metasemiotic discourse explaining a set of emblems of Norwegian identity: national dress, the royal crest, rice porridge (*risgrøt*), and a stave church (*stavkirke*, a very old style of wooden church found in Norway, some of which have been preserved for centuries and still stand today).

These cultural models inform the more particular metapragmatic models that simultaneously make Constitution Day legible as a “national day” and make Norwegian national identities legible on that day. As the comments by the Norwegian university official in my account from the 17th of May in Oslo in 2018 reveal, Norwegians imagine the 17th of May as one of many national day celebrations in countries all over the world. Indeed, as we see in the university official’s discourse, at least some Norwegians pride themselves on the holiday’s distinctiveness from other events in the same genre,

highlighting to the uninitiated its focus on children rather than the military. Such discourse contributes to effects of both adequation and distinction: Norway is like other nations in that it has a national day; it is unlike them in that its national day celebrates children and civil society rather than military might. The event is constructed in such a way as to make Norwegian nationhood clearly perceivable within the Norwegian context through the use of recognizable emblems of Norwegian-ness deployed in a recognizable genre of event.

Two Metapragmatic Models Guided by the Same Metasemiotic Scheme

In understanding the frameworks according to which ethnicity becomes the primary salient identity on Norway's national day, Silverstein's (1993) concept of metapragmatic models is useful. Silverstein locates the basis for the intelligibility of particular meanings in expectations about what kinds of people should be expected to appear at a particular genre of event. Metapragmatic models—which can be communicated explicitly through metasemiotic discourse or learned through experience or both—constrain the possible meanings a perceiving subject can read from an event, making it possible for the perceiving subject to determine which perceivable things should be interpreted as signs and which models of identity they are indexing in this particular context. At Norwegian national day celebrations, peoples' understandings of the genre of the event shape their participation and shape how others interpret the signs produced as a part of the celebration. In this case, the solidity of the cultural model of the event itself, to which newcomers are often introduced via discourse and which many

inhabitants of Norway are introduced to through childhood experiences, very much constrains the possible meanings that can be read from the event.

For Silverstein (1993) and Agha (2007) metapragmatic models primarily organize the link between behavioral signs and the events in which they are deployed. However, other scholars have built on this concept in a more encompassing way, using the same term, metapragmatic model, to denote the cultural models (or “metacultural models” to use Urban’s [2001] phrasing) that organize not only conduct but also a variety of other indexical signs. Wortham (2006) provides a more encompassing articulation of how metapragmatic models structure (or organize) the conditions of intelligibility in pragmatic semiotic events:

[A] sign—an utterance or object that people find culturally meaningful—has meaning only with respect to a ‘metapragmatic’ or ‘metacultural’ model of it. A metapragmatic model is a model of *recognizable kinds* of people . . . participating in a recognizable kind of interaction. These models are ‘meta’-pragmatic because they frame the ‘pragmatic’ or indexical signs of identity. That is, participants and analysts understand the meaning of a sign only as a relevant model constrains the possible meanings. . . Such models make available *types of people* that can be enacted in a given social context. Without them, we could not identify who people are or what they are signaling about themselves and others. (Wortham 2006, 32–33, emphasis mine)

Rosa (2019, 113) builds on Wortham’s gloss of the concept to discuss how the use of or proximity to “distinct objects, practices, and characteristics” can be understood to index membership in distinct national categories Rosa (2019) analyzes the operation of two national metapragmatic models in the local context of a Chicago neighborhood and its public high school. In his ethnographic analysis, Mexican-ness and Puerto Rican-ness are perceivable in analogue events to the ones discussed here: the annual Chicago Puerto Rican People’s Day Parade and a parade celebrating Mexican independence day (September 16th) are also celebrated annually in Chicago. However, Rosa’s analysis

focuses more closely on how students learn and enforce upon one another metapragmatic models in the context of their four years side-by-side in the school setting. He focuses on how students' talk about the differences between Mexican and Puerto Rican appearances and practices, building lengthy tables listing the metapragmatic stereotypes that constitute two complementary models of personhood (Rosa 2019, 114–117).

As Agha (2007) has pointed out, it is not sufficient for people to be familiar with a cultural model only through discourse about the model; people need to experience the enactment of the model. In the case of the Sami in Norway, where Sami people comprise only a small minority in most areas of the country, the celebration of Sami National Day, and the mass mediation of the event creates an opportunity to make Sami-ness overtly perceivable, to give people a sense of a direct experience of Sami ethnonational identity. The metapragmatic model employed on Sami National Day differs in its content from the one that organizes Constitution Day; it features reindeer stew, not hot dogs, and the Sami flag with its red, green, yellow, and blue, not the Norwegian one with its blue, red, and white. Nonetheless, it follows the same general metasemiotic scheme that links ethnic models of identity that contain certain criterial components to the national day celebration, creating the effect of ethnonational identities on display. The tenets of the model, like those Rosa (2019) elicited from his interlocutors in Chicago, can easily be diagrammed to show the parallels created between Norwegian and Sami identities as their own unique cultural content fulfills a common metasemiotic scheme (Table 1).

17th of May, Oslo

6th of February, Tromsø

Food	<i>is, pølse</i> (ice cream, hot dogs)	<i>biđos</i> (reindeer stew)
Language	Norwegian (many dialects) ¹⁸¹	Sami languages
Dress	<i>bunad</i> (and national dress, generally)	<i>gákti/kofte</i>
Song	<i>Ja vil elsker dette landet</i>	<i>Sami Soga Lávlla</i>
Flag		

Table 1: Criterial signs of Sami and Norwegian “peoples”; two complementary metapragmatic models that follow parallel metasemiotic schemes

The celebrations of the 17th of May and the 6th of February I have described in this chapter can be read as multi-channel texts in which foods, forms of dress, flags, and colors come together to embody Norwegian-ness or Sami-ness. Celebrations of Sami National Day and Constitution Day do not, in every instance, make perceivable *all* possible criterial signs associated with national metapragmatic models. The parallels carry on beyond those on display in the events I have discussed here. For example, *duodji* is understood in ways that clearly parallel the Norwegian investment in *håndverk* (handwork, handicrafts) (see Table 1). Olsen and Sollid’s (2019, 127) recent analysis of

¹⁸¹ See Sollid (2013, 2014) and Strand (2012), among others, on the many Norwegian dialects and how these are maintained in contemporary Norway as an object of pride, in contradistinction to the stigmatization of regional and rural dialects as symbols of lower class status in the past.

Sami National Day in North Norwegian schools demonstrates how some of these additional parallels, like *duodji*, are mobilized in events surrounding February 6th, other than city hall ceremonies (see Figure 4). Their observations about the common forms of Sami content to appear at such events reflect similarities with my own observations of Sami Week in Tromsø in 2016 and 2019. At the same time their report from their research in schools also confirms the parallel I point to here extends to school celebrations/observations of Sami national day in terms of its form with speeches, singing of the national anthem, the serving and eating of foods marked as particularly Sami, all of which Olsen and Sollid (2019, 127) characterize as “ritual-like activity.”



Figure 5: Implicit parallels are constructed beyond the ritual-like events themselves. See here, photos of special February issues of magazines highlighting Sami National Day on the February national calendar (photos by the author, the one on the left was taken at the gift shop of the Norwegian Folk Museum in Oslo in 2017, the one on the right was taken in Tromsø in 2019)

Nonetheless, these public commemorations mobilize a wide swath of the semiotic range of each of the two ethnonational categories in a single “ritual-like” event. In doing so, they make the model itself implicitly visible (and they provide the opportunity for explicit explanation of the links between perceivable things and meanings, like Katri’s explanation of the *gákti* at city hall). By making perceivable models of Sami-ness and Norwegian-ness in similar ways (keeping stable the “given social context” across the two metapragmatic models [Wortham 2006, 33]), these two events create a host of effects not just within each of the two events, but *across* the two. That is to say certain things take on particular meanings in the celebration of Sami National Day by virtue of participants’ knowledge of the established indexical relationships mobilized in the Norwegian national day celebrations.

The events make Sami-ness and Norwegian-ness perceivable—even hyper-visible—in ways these identities are not in everyday life. Though Sami identity has long been (and in some perspectives, continues to be) understood as a racial identity, reading Sami identity from features of physical embodiment is not necessarily easy, even for Sami people who grew up in Sami-majority communities. In an interview in 2016, one interlocutor, who grew up in interior Finnmark, told me how once, when she worked at a Sami advocacy organization, she spent months trying to determine whether a colleague she was slowly befriending was Sami or not. She just couldn’t be sure from the usual signs. She didn’t recognize the young woman’s last name, it was not possible to make any determination based on dialect alone, and there was nothing about a person’s looks that could determine for certain which ethnic category that person would identify with. In the fashion that is typical of work culture in Norway, rather than asking outright about

her colleague's identity, my friend spent weeks trying to read the signs to determine whether her colleague was Sami or not (this is not so straightforward to assess, as Thuen [2012] and Saugestad [2012b] discuss). Finally, the woman wore clearly jewelry with a clearly Sami motif one day, solidifying the impression of her Sami identity and solving the mystery.

In his analysis ethnoracial models of identity in the US Latinx context, Rosa (2019, 106) points out that “all ethnoracial categories . . . are produced through processes of differentiation and homogenization.” None are “naturally” internally homogenous from any actual starting point. Rosa (2019, 106) would have analysts focus on “the cultural processes that make perceptions of visibility and embodiment possible,” rather than on the characteristics (especially physical features, which are so emphasized in US life and even scholarship [Alcoff 2006]) of those individuals considered to be part of a group.

In Norway, the 17th of May provides a primary context for learning how to perceive ethnonational identity through emblems like those listed in Table 1. As other ethnographers have pointed out, it is closely involved in Norwegians' negotiations of national “sameness” and the creation of a bigger gap between ethnic Norwegians and citizens from other backgrounds, even as other identities (class position, gender, and so on) may be shared among a different breakdown of the two groups (Blehr 1999b; Gullestad 2002). As Olsen and Sollid (2019, 133) have noted, and as I seek to demonstrate more fully here, the 17th of May provides a template for the celebration of Sami National Day. Rosa might say that the modes of perception already employed on the 17th of May are mobilized in celebrations of Sami National Day, at least, as Olsen and

Sollid (2019) point out, within communities with a strong connection to Sami identity, like Tromsø and other North Norwegian municipalities.

Alignment Across Events

Here, I characterize this as a kind of alignment between distinct metapragmatic models that takes place across events, through which certain metasemiotic schemes, like the notion of ethnonational identity elaborated in these two events, are further concretized and naturalized through their repetition across distinct contexts. When anthropologists have written about alignment in their analyses of multi-channel texts or even in simple speech events, they have focused on sequence and simultaneity within the event itself (Agha 2007), though elsewhere they have written about semiosis across encounters, rather than just within individual events (Agha 2005). Analysis *across* the commemorations of the 17th of May in Oslo and the 6th of February in Tromsø reveals a different sort of alignment *across* events. By fitting into the same genre of event, the two commemorations produce parallel, complementary categories of personhood—Norwegian and Sami—that, though they differ in their details, fit the same metasemiotic scheme, a framework that asserts ethnonational belonging as a foundation for political and societal organization. The metasemiotic scheme organizes a set of signs and each event celebrates certain things as fulfilling that element of the scheme for one particular category, reinforcing (naturalizing) the notion that ethnicity is a natural component of peoples' identities and a critical basis of political formations as well.

As multi-channel texts (the meanings within which are constrained by relevant metapragmatic models), both Sami National Day and Norwegian Constitution Day,

produce powerful effects of adequation within their respective events. Yet, details of the embodiments of Sami-ness and Norwegian-ness in the scenes I witnessed also involved distinction. Just like the Norwegian model, which emphasizes regional difference—readable through dialect and dress—the Sami model also emphasizes a form of unity in diversity. Even as the two events, understood in the context of one another, produce a powerful adequation of the Norwegian and Sami identities as the same *kind* of identities (ethnonational ones), these events also make the differences between the two, in terms of cultural content, readily perceivable. Even as both distinction and adequation are important to the effects generated between these events, the other uses of identity that Bucholtz and Hall (2004) place alongside this first continuum are not so evenly represented in this ethnographic context. For the most part, these two events, understood in the context of one another, produce powerful effects of naturalization and authorization of the models of identity that are the very subject of these events.

The existence of complementary Sami and Norwegian national days makes Norwegians and Samis comparable as nations, even as in other moments or by other parties they may be discussed as a minority and a majority or a nation state and its Indigenous people (alternative “frames of interpretation” or “frames of understanding” to follow Gullestad’s [2002] discussion of Norwegian nationalism). When the enactment of Sami-ness and Norwegian-ness in these two events are carried out without much visible dissent or challenge—as was my observation in each of the specific cases I have recounted here—they make Sami and Norwegian “essences” seem natural, unquestioned, and perhaps unquestionable. In the context of these events, ethnicity becomes something an individual needs to have and cannot avoid, the way gender, for instance, works in

everyday life. I had trouble, for example, fitting my Americanness into the framework for 17th of May when non-Norwegians were encouraged to wear their “national dress.” The absence of an ethnic identification becomes palpable for those that lack one and therefore lack a clear place in the national social formation, even where it is, increasingly, a multi-ethnic one (Batvor 2021). Everyone in Norway knows of both 17th of May and 6th of February, both of which are intensely mass-mediated in addition to elaborate, well-attended events in many locations for the 17th and in at least some locations for Sami National Day. Knowledge of both makes clear a parallel between Sami-ness and Norwegian-ness.

Ultimately, these two events help to make real and immediate the oft-quoted line from the King’s speech at the opening of the Sami Parliament in 1997: “The Norwegian state is founded on the territory of two peoples — Norwegians and Samis.”¹⁸² By utilizing the same genre of event and fulfilling the terms of the same metasemiotic scheme, Sami National Day embodies this idea. Indeed, the creation of Sami National Day, in the years leading up to this well-known speech, may have helped—alongside the creation of Sami institutions—to make that the King’s explicit statement thinkable, articulable, and comprehensible to Norwegian audiences.

Hierarchy, Even Between “Two Peoples”

¹⁸² The videoclip of this part of the speech is available from the public broadcaster NRK at the following link: <https://www.nrk.no/video/176430>. The article it accompanied in 2014 gave the transcription of the text as “*Den norske stat er grunnlagt på territoriet til to folk – nordmenn og samer*” (Kintel et al. 2014).

And yet, these framing of “two peoples” of the territory of the Norwegian state does not necessarily convey equality on the two, even in the enactment and attention to the two comparable national days. The parallel between the two events that I have established above is clearest when looking between the two ritual centers of Oslo, for 17th of May, and Tromsø, for 6th of February. If one looks at things in the opposite frame, other patterns are visible. Tromsø hosts a vibrant 17th of May celebration, during which Sami residents come out to the parade in their *gákti* and Norwegian residents parade in *bunad* as well as in other forms of national dress or simply formal clothes (suits, dresses). It maintains many of the patterns typical of celebrations of the 17th of May across the country.¹⁸³ However, this is not the case in the reverse; Sami National Day celebrations are not equally visible in the national capital as they in Tromsø.

Having attending Sami National Day celebrations at the city hall in Tromsø in 2016, when I was living in Oslo in 2018, I followed the same approach to try to see what kinds of public celebration of Sami National Day would take place in the city. In Oslo, I didn't have Sami hosts (like my colleagues from the Centre for Sami Studies in Tromsø) to demystify the program for me, so I looked it up online. I found previous press coverage of Sami National Day in Oslo. Particularly prominent in the coverage was the breakfast with the King that Sami residents of the city can sign up to attend, a formal even in the city hall, with attendees decked out in *gákti* and Sami jewelry. Also online, through the resources of the Sami House in Oslo (*Samisk hus*), a meeting place and cultural organization for Sami people in the city, I found a program for the day that listed a service in Sami language at the Domkirke (the cathedral in downtown Oslo, a major

¹⁸³ The celebration of Sami National Day in Tromsø does lack the large parades that characterize 17th of May celebrations (as detailed in Blehr 1999b; Botvar 2021).

landmark) and the raising of the flag at the city hall. The press coverage from prior years featured photos of the flags flying and coverage of concerts by Sami artists. Of course, the day was not technically a holiday and people still had to go to work, but given my expectations from my experience in Tromsø, I expected an event.

The morning of February 6, 2018, I left my Norwegian course early, explaining vaguely that I had to be somewhere else, and walked across the city center to Oslo's city hall. I was surprised to find the flagstone plaza around the building almost completely empty. A film crew huddled around their equipment. Otherwise, I was the only person there. I watched to see what they were doing, and I realized that the NRK crew was broadcasting from the spot. They filmed an introduction. I overheard a woman say something along the lines of "We are live today from the city hall in Oslo, for the celebration of Sami National Day . . ." and then they shot a video of the Sami flag flying over the plaza, angling the camera high and keeping the empty plaza below out of the shot (Figure 5).



Figure 6: Oslo City Hall on Sami National Day, a film crew rolls at right and enormous Sami flags hang limp on the flagpoles in the still of mid-morning (photo by the author, February 2018).

Even as Sami National Day makes a Sami nation intelligible by using Constitution Day as a template for its own festivities, the effect of this parallel is limited by the limited attention to February 6th by non-Sami Norwegians. In his ethnographic inquiry into the work of multiculturalism in Japan, Hankins's (2014, 167) describes how Buraku activist advocating for the end to stigma around their minority identity host educational events that are well attended but during which many of the attendees fall asleep in the audience. Just as this "sleeping public" limits the achievements of Buraku advocates in Japan, so too is Sami national day embraced in theory, but less so in practice. Among many Norwegians, attention to Sami National Day is recognized as the

right thing to do—it is lifted up; it is broadcast live—but a lack real attention to the celebration belies the imagery that one encounters online.

In the national center, the ritual center for the production of Norwegian national imaginaries, Sami-ness is taken to belong to someone else and to belong somewhere else. Local scholars in Oslo who bridge the gap between the Sami scholarly milieu centered in the North and research institutions in the south have been confronted with this dynamic quite directly. Researchers who lead Sami research at OsloMet, the new city university in Oslo, founded in 2018, had, by 2020, been asked so many times “Why is a university in Oslo so concerned with observing Sami Peoples Day?” that they wrote an article explaining and defending their commitment (Horn et al. 2020).¹⁸⁴ All Norwegians are expected to celebrate Constitution Day—and, according to Botvar (2021), nine of ten do in some form—even as the holiday centers ethnic Norwegians and makes ethnic identity a more salient form of sameness within Norwegian society than other common civic identities that inhabitants of Norway share, regardless of their ancestral background (Blehr 1999b; Gullestad 2002).¹⁸⁵

And yet, at least in social media and mass media, Norwegians do increasingly engage with Sami National Day. The form this engagement takes is revealing of the hierarchy that still exists between these “two peoples” of Norway. Sami experiences of how Norwegians acknowledge their peoplehood is characterized by their position, as a

¹⁸⁴ While OsloMet is new as a university, it is not new as an institution. It got the status of a university in 2018; before that it was the Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus (HiOA), a “university-college” in the Norwegian educational system, which is something like a community college in the US higher education system (Hansen and Messel 2020).

¹⁸⁵ Gullestad (2002) and Blehr (1999b) point out that other possibilities include class solidarities (an element of 17th of May celebrations in past centuries) and civic identities. These are classic examples of what Gal and Irvine (2019, 20–21) call “erasure.” Attention is paid to certain things, which fit a particular ideology, while those elements that do not fit, while they might not actually be eradicated, are not paid attention to or are explained away.

group among other groups in a hierarchies of minorities in Norway. News outlets were remarking, at least as early as 2019, that more and more Norwegians were using the expression *lihkku beivviin* in North Sami rather than the equivalent expression in Norwegian, *gratulere med dagen*, to congratulate Sami people on their national day (both expressions can be used on occasions from national holidays to birthdays). For Sami National Day 2020, members of Parliament released videos of them saying both greetings (*lihkku beivviin* and *gratulere med dagen*), an act, as explained in the press, that was meant to communicate that they are representatives of the whole of Norway. A political advisor to the Sami Parliament said to NRK reporters of the congratulations in Sami language, “This shows that the majority society has also embraced the day,” even as many of the representatives struggled to pronounce the expression and commented to the journalists how difficult it was (Ballovara and Utsi 2020). It provides an inversion of the dynamics Gullestad (2002) notes between immigrants to Norway and Norwegians. Where immigrants are expected to strive to be as culturally Norwegian as they can to and praise Norway, here Sami politicians praise Norwegian representatives for even a superficial effort to engage with Sami language. Even as the Sami have been identified by anthropologists as sitting at the top of a hierarchy of value among the various minorities in Norway (Gullestad 2001), it is clear that this position still entails limitations to how Sami people can expect the Norwegian minority to engage with Sami distinctiveness from the majority society.

Conclusion

As Wortham (2006, 32–33) has put it in his synthesis of Silverstein (1993) and Urban’s (2001) work on metapragmatic or metacultural models, any given sign, utterance, or object “has meaning only with respect to a ‘metapragmatic’ or ‘metacultural’ model of it.” Models of personhood only become understandable in light of metapragmatic models of “recognizable kinds of people . . . participating in a recognizable kind of interaction.” The existence of a Norwegian national day provides a “recognizable kind of interaction” in which a Sami (ethno)nation can appear as recognizable to all those familiar with Norwegian Constitution Day, which is to say, most every inhabitant of Norway.

European nationalisms are rooted in sets of cultural “idioms”—indexical signs, like the national flags, and practices, including linguistic practices, that are received as symbols (Irvine and Gal 2000; Limerick 2018). This ideology of national identity takes as given that national identities are rooted in ethnic identities and should be perceivable through sets of signs associated with ethnic categories. These are ontological assumptions, in Kockelman’s (2013a, 2013b) sense. And, more than just linking signs to social types, events where these signs are deployed together according to an ethnonational formation work to naturalize the legitimacy of the nation state (both naturalizing and authenticating, in Bucholtz and Hall’s [2004] typology).

The recognizability of ethnonational metasemiotic schemes in Norway creates an opportunity for Sami people. They can deploy their own set of Sami idioms (Eidheim 1989; Kemi Gjerpe 2013) as signs of national distinctiveness, a peoplehood that, in the Norwegian context, clearly implies political rights. The close link between nationhood

and ethnic distinctiveness in Norway, honed during the country's long embrace of national romanticism as symbolic resources in justifying Norwegian political independence (Haverkamp 2019), provides an opening for articulating Sami-ness not just as an ethnicity but as an ethnonationality. Though at times the strategy backfires (see Lien [2018], on opposition to Sami National Day because of Norwegians' assumptions that nationality is inextricably linked to sovereignty), the opportunity that Sami people have to articulate their identity in terms of widely understood ethnonational cultural models represents a political opportunity that many other Indigenous peoples lack. Through Sami idioms, in general, and even more so through their use in the "ritual-like practices" of Sami National Day (Olsen and Sollid 2019), Sami people can draw a parallel between their own group and Norwegians as an ethnonational group. If Norwegian nationhood entailed a form of Norwegian self-determination as early as 1814, and eventually entailed Norwegian national independence in 1905, then surely it is logical that Sami people should have their own Sami Parliament as well, just as the Norwegian Parliament operated within the union with Sweden for more than 100 years. The symbolic resources of language, dress, handicrafts, arts, music, food, and so on become political resources that can be mobilized toward Sami goals; at least as long as those goals mirror and accommodate Norwegian political priorities (Kuokkanen 2011).

In many other Indigenous contexts, it is not straightforward to cultivate this kind a parallel and complementarity. In the United States, predominant national imaginaries do not center on imagined sameness the way they do in Norway (Gullestad 2002), though they have their own implications for racial exclusion (Jung et. al 2011; Omi and Winant 2015). American identity has often been linked with modernity and progress, with these

conceptions set in relief against a backdrop of imagined Indigenous backwardness and stagnancy, a tradition that originated in New England (O'Brien 2010). Because Indigenous people are figured as the foil to Americans, not their complement, the symbolic parallel that can easily be drawn between Sami and Norwegian “peoples” (*folk*,) is not readily available in the US context.¹⁸⁶

These differences are visible even in how certain similar practices are received in the US as compared to in Norway. Take, for instance, Indigenous peoples’ use of forms of traditional dress on particular occasion to mark a historical event in a contemporary annual cycle. In Chapter 7, I have already discussed at length one example of this kind of practice from Norway: the use of *gákti* on Sami National Day in Tromsø Norway, where Sami National Day is a contemporary flag day and also commemorates the historical pan-Sami meeting in Trondheim on the same day in 1917. However, this was not the only event that used dress as one element of a commemorative event. I also traveled to eastern Massachusetts to attend an annual event hosted by Natick Nipmuc families each October, in commemoration of the internment of Nipmuc ancestors on Deer Island in Boston’s harbor in 1675.

The event, which draws participation not only from Nipmuc communities but from other Indigenous people of and living in the region, combines a memorial paddle and walking/running route with other elements of ceremony and a dinner at the end of the day. As one of many elements of the event, some participants wear forms of dress with stylistic elements drawing on historical Indigenous clothing, less elaborate than the

¹⁸⁶ Norwegian *folk* (people/s) has much the same sense as the more widely known German *volk*. It does not just mean humans or humanity (*menneskeheten*), it implies the Herderian understanding of a people or several nationally distinct peoples.

regalia seen at regional powwows but distinctive nonetheless. In one conversation I had with one of the event's chief organizers, she lamented how the press never seemed able to properly understand the event. She was disgusted by one outsider's description of the paddle as a "reenactment." She stressed that it was a memorial, not a reenactment.

Having attended the Deer Island memorial myself, that anyone could characterize it as a reenactment seemed unbelievable; the events memorialized are dire and disturbing.¹⁸⁷ Why would anyone seek to recreate these horrific events? The term memorial made much more sense. But then I asked myself what other events are described as reenactments and it occurred to me that reenactments in New England, as across much of the eastern US, are often focused on playing out gruesome and disturbing scenes: battles are a common feature, with participants dressed in period costume shooting long guns and pretending to die on the battlefield. In the US reenactments are the main, if not the only, genre of event where period dress is used, not only to portray not only social categories but historical individuals. Without actually participating in the memorial or engaging more deeply with Nipmuc people, reenactment may have been the only term journalists could think of for how to describe and place the event they were tasked with covering. In the US, using a form of dress linked to the past does not smoothly index ancestral connection or nationality the way it can in Norway; the past is expected to be the past and to serve a variety of contemporary functions but not to forge horizontal solidarities in the present.

¹⁸⁷ This exile, sparked by colonists' misplaced suspicion and distrust during the escalation of the conflict widely known as King Phillips War, resulted in the deaths of many and the suffering of all involved. See Brooks (2018) and DeLucia (2018) on the conflict and DeLucia (2012) for a discussion of both the war and the Deer Island memorial, as well as reenactments among the settler population in the region.

My trouble in translating the Norwegian word *markering* in this chapter is yet another symptom of these differences; the English word “commemoration” implies the marking of a single event in the past, not the marking of a continuous and horizontal ethnic category on contemporary calendars and in contemporary self-conceptions. Even among some Nipmucs in my interviews, taking up idioms of Indigenous dress was dismissed as “feather and leathers” that had no real link to Nipmuc identities today. That interviewee eschewed notions of authenticity, stating that he embraced his mixed heritage and “did [his] hunting and gathering at Big Y [a regional supermarket chain].” Because wider publics in the United States, and perhaps in New England especially, so consistently link Indigeneity to the past, it can be difficult for contemporary Indigenous people to be viewed as Indigenous solely in light of the contemporaneity (O’Brien 2010; Gould 2013). This state of affairs provokes a range of reactions among Indigenous people today to any cultural form or practice that links Indigenous people to the past, including the ironic stance Doughton expressed in his comment about contemporary Indigenous food provisioning strategies.

Even as, in some contexts, Nordic identities are closely linked with modernity as an element of Nordic exceptionalism (Murphy 2015), it is clear from an analysis of national day celebrations that in Norway these associations are tempered with the articulation, on certain occasions, of a Norwegian ethno-nation as the foundation for Norwegian sovereignty. The construction of a Sami ethnonational formation that parallels the Norwegian one, when combined with Sami political elites’ denial of any desire for political sovereignty (Kuokkanen 2011), makes the Sami ethnonational category appear complementary to the Norwegian one. In some ways, it even props up an ethnically-

grounded notion of Norwegian nationhood in light of other alternatives (see the debates over whether Norway should join the EU in 1990 [Eriksen 1993]).

In the US, by contrast, the ongoing existence of Native Americans is a reminder of the fact that the conquest and extinction narratives are myths and as a reminder of the nation's birth in genocide, despite the rhetoric of high ideals around the nation's founding in "freedom." It is difficult to articulate any form of Native American collective existence that supports, rather than challenges, US hegemony. Mobilizations of Indigenous peoples' relationships to the nation state in New England undermine rather than reinforce the foundations of the US national state. Take, for instance the National Day of Mourning protest, an annual event run by an intertribal activist organization in Massachusetts every year since 1970. This annual event reframes the Thanksgiving holiday—which supposedly celebrates a feast between Wampanoag people and English settlers—as a "day of mourning" rather than a day of Thanksgiving (Black 2009; James and Munro 1998; Munro and James 2008). Those who continue the tradition of this event insist on the founding of the United States as a tragedy rather than a cause for celebration.

I suggest here that these contrasting interpretive frames, at the highest level of what a nation is and where its legitimacy derives from, form an important reason for the differences between the dynamics of both social and political recognition of Indigenous people in the US and Norway. The success of the Sami in achieving forms of official recognition from the Norwegian state enabled, though not per se *caused*, by the ease with which Norwegians can recognize Sami people not only as a collectivity but as a nation, and as an ethno-nation with comparable foundations to those of the Norwegian nation itself.

This differs substantially not only from the situation in the US, but also from the relationship between states and “their” Indigenous peoples in contexts of “blue water” colonialism more generally (Minde 1995, 9; Saugestad 2008, 159). Adese (2012), writing on Canada, demonstrates the opposition, not parallelism between Canadian nationalism and First Nations identification during the Olympic games in Canada. Simpson (2014, 1) highlights how US political discourse that insists “we are all immigrants” invisibilizes and excludes Native Americans from the national formation. Povinelli (2002) has written on how Aboriginal peoples are positioned as “our” Indigenous people by an Australian “we,” adding a form of value-added to CDs and art pieces, even those produced by non-Indigenous Australians. She explains how Indigenous Australians must walk a thin line, appearing distinct and authentic enough to be recognizable as Indigenous, but not so different so as to be repugnant to liberal sensibilities. Examples abound; in none of them is a parallel between the majority society and Indigenous people as “two peoples” the primary framing. In the case of the Sami in Norway, by contrast, through matching the precise metasemiotic schemes used in articulating Norwegian-ness, Sami people are more readily able to articulate a felicitous form of difference, which many other Indigenous people struggle to achieve.

And yet, like any form of imagined sameness, this ethno-national formation implies the glossing over of internal differences within the group (adequation), the celebration of some characteristics as authentic (naturalization), and the marginalization of others as lacking in authenticity, both socially (Kemi Gjerpe 2013) and politically. In the case of the Sami in Norway, those practices upheld as symbolic components of Sami nationality, language most of all, can become grounds for the marginalization of those

who do not have command of the language (Dankertson 2016). Today such criteria are not only part of metapragmatic models—which is to say social models of identity—they are also explicit elements of legal models of identity in the Sami Act that condition access to political participation. Thus, for those who do not closely fit the image of authenticity constructed by political elites’ embrace of ethnonational formations that parallel Norwegian models, this strategic essentialism—strategic in terms of its intelligibility to the majority society—has its price (Norvang-Herstrøm 2018).

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how some of the outcomes of the political recognition of Sami as Indigenous people of Norway feed back into the social recognizability of the Sami as not just a distinct group but specifically as a nation according to widespread assumptions about the relationship between ethnicity and nationhood that circulate in Norwegian society. The celebration of Sami National Day following the same conventions as Norwegian Constitution Day contributes to the construction of a parallel position for Sami and Norwegian peoples within the Norwegian nation state in a way that does not happen in many other Indigenous contexts.

Anthropologists have long pointed to the fact that all metasemiotic schemes and the ways people use them politically—or “ideologically” (Silverstein 1979, 193; Eisenlohr 2006, 18; Gal and Irvine 2019; 21)—are historically contingent. Close analysis of metasemiotic schemes, how they are enacted, and how they are made graspable in reflexive reanalysis (metasemiotic discourse) provides the opportunity to consider the particularity of how Indigenous difference is made comprehensible. Analysis of metasemiotic schemes also reveals the formative exclusions that every naturalized framing relies on for the creation of sameness as well as difference. Sami experiences of their own social and political

recognizability are conditioned by these existing metasemiotic schemes and how Sami political agents have elaborated a parallel form of ethnonational identity that can be understood by Norwegian society as the foundation for political rights.

CHAPTER 7

DURABLE OUTCOMES OF THE RECOGNITION HISTORY AND CHANGING CONTEXTS FOR “INDIGENOUS QUESTIONS” IN THE PRESENT

Introducing the Forum: The Beginning of the End

By chance, it turned out that I would be arriving in Tromsø for the first time on the same day that the Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples (*Forum for Urfolksspørsmål i Bistand*) would be meeting for the very last time. The group, which my hosts at the Centre for Sami Studies called “the Forum,” was having its annual conference on the campus of UiT, The Arctic University of Norway (*UiT Norges Arktisk Universitet*). Arrangements were made for me to attend, and so I had booked an early flight out of Oslo, arriving in the gray January skies above Tromsø just a couple hours later.

Upon landing, I made my way, via public bus, to the UiT campus at the north end of the almond-shaped island of Tromsøya. When I reached the appointed building, two young women, students in the Master in Indigenous Studies program, welcomed me from the other side of a registration table. They checked my name off their list and handed me a folder (Figure 6). It contained the agenda for the two-day meeting, a recent position document from the Norwegian Sami Parliament, and a list of people attending from the Norwegian government, Indigenous political, academic, and civil society organizations. The front of the folder featured a full color photo of Árdna, the Sami cultural house on campus at UiT. In the photo, a room with glass walls, its ceiling supported by foot-thick, rough-cut timbers, was bathed in orange light against the black of the night outside. Six

people in Sami traditional dress (*gákti*, North Sámi, or *kofter*, Norwegian) in different colors—red, green, dark blue—sat in a circle around a fire burning inside a fire pit recessed into the room’s floor. One other figure wore some other kind of traditional clothing, complete with necklaces, a headband, and a roach headdress, the kind you see at a powwow in North America.¹⁸⁸ All seven figures on the folder gazed solemnly into the fire at the center of the circle.

¹⁸⁸ Unlike the most stereotypical feathered headdresses used by chiefs of groups from the plains, roach headdresses (or roaches) are made from the guard hairs of deer, moose, or porcupine and were and are used widely in North America.



Figure 7: The folder handed out at registration for the Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples in 2016 (photo by the author 2021)

In contrast to this image on the folder, the classroom I walked into for the Forum was an ordinary university classroom with narrow tables set up across the room, facing the front, where a projection screen hung at the ready. Those who had arrived earlier than I did were coming in from a group lunch, and I could hear their chatter—a mixture of

English and Norwegian—from a nearby room. Slowly, people began to come in and sit down, trickling in one by one and in small groups, taking seats at the rows of tables.

Within a matter of minutes, the meeting began. A tall woman with dark hair styled in blunt bangs stood at the front of the room and called everyone to attention. This was the chair of the Forum’s board, an American anthropologist whose fieldwork with Indigenous people in southern Africa eventually led her to an academic position here in the Arctic. The anthropologist welcomed us to the fifteenth meeting of the Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous peoples, but she did not mince words about the occasion.

“The Forum is ending,” she stated before retracing the shifts in the situation of Indigenous peoples over the 15 years of the Forum’s existence. These years, from 2000 to 2016, had seen “huge growth in the international indigenous rights movement” and “so much more participation from Indigenous peoples at the global level,” in institutions like the United Nations, leading to more awareness among other “global level” actors. And yet, she said, the challenges Indigenous peoples face have not resolved and in some regards have worsened. Although this was the Forum for Indigenous Peoples *in Development Cooperation*, the challenges she listed—climate change, war, land encroachment and exploitation by extractive industries, and suicide among Indigenous youth—were not in and of themselves issues of development. Instead, these were “Indigenous issues,” the crosscutting challenges that Indigenous peoples continue to face.

As a longtime member of the Forum and chair of the its board, the anthropologist opened the meeting by introducing these challenges as essential to the concerns of the Forum and its attendees. After establishing the scope of the Forum’s work, she turned to

Norway's record on Indigenous issues. At first, she painted a positive picture of Norway as a pathbreaking country in the support of Indigenous rights through international instruments.¹⁸⁹ But in pointing out that historically "Norway has been a major player" in Indigenous rights, she was leading up to the threat, lurking in the closure of the Forum, that this might cease to be the case.

Without raising her head from her notes, she looked up at her audience, her icy blue eyes peering through her dark-rimmed glasses. She extended "all due respect" to the government actors in the room, and then stated her view of the situation plainly: "Recently, we have seen a trend in declining funding for Indigenous peoples' rights . . . [in Norway and the Nordic countries] . . . but the international rights movement is *not* a trend." Support for Indigenous rights should not go up and down according to which political party is in power, she said, implying that the treatment of Indigenous rights as a trend was exactly what was happening; that was why, after 15 years, this would be the Forum's last meeting, at least in its current form. The anthropologist concluded with the question she wanted us to consider that afternoon and the following morning, during the final days—the final hours really—of the Forum's 15 years: "How might we continue the Forum's work without the Forum itself?"

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In this chapter, I argue that the Forum was not just a space for presenting information; it also provided a setting for building and renewing social connections among the variety of actors whose work—political, scholarly, bureaucratic, or action-

¹⁸⁹ She pointed out that in addition to endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) without delay in 2007, Norway is "one of the only countries outside Latin America to sign ILO 169," the International Labor Organization's convention on the rights of Indigenous peoples (ILO 1989).

oriented—centers on Indigenous issues. I analyze the Forum in Tromsø in 2016 as a focal event where these commitments become clearly visible and where they are challenged, not through overt opposition to Indigenous rights but through changes to the way state actors understand the purpose of development work and the relationship between Indigenous peoples and national states. The Sami are clearly recognized as the Indigenous people of Norway and, from the vantage point of 2016, the formal steps by which this acknowledgment was accomplished through the creation of the Norwegian Sami Parliament and the addition of the “Sami paragraph” to the constitution were already a generation old. None have been repealed or walked back. And yet, even as Sami recognized status is secure in Norway, we will see in this chapter that other entailments of state recognition are vulnerable to change and erosion over time. The threat of the loss of entailments of recognition that had seemed to be firmly established is an important and underacknowledged element of the Sami experience of their recognized status today.

The Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples (FDCIP), the focal event in this chapter, was established in Norway in 2000 as a means by which to involve the Sami Parliament in Norway’s “development cooperation” efforts affecting Indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world. The Forum is the successor institution to an earlier program called Indigenous People in Development Cooperation (*Urfolk i Bistand*), which was created as part of Norway’s first official policy on Indigenous peoples’ challenges at the global scale. This earlier program emerged from the Norwegian Indigenous Peoples Program (*Det norske urfolkssprogrammet*) that was put forward in 1983 (Saugestad 2012a, 4), just prior to the release of the final report of the first Sami

Rights Committee in 1984 (NOU 1984:18) and the enactment of the Sami Act in 1987, and during the initial years during which the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) was beginning its work on what would later become the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (Minde 2008, 51; Minde et al. 2008, 5). This working group quickly became the largest United Nations forum dealing with human rights issues, and by the time the Permanent Forum had its first meeting in 2002, such a wide range of projects and programs about Indigenous issues existed that its first order of business was simply to make Indigenous participants aware of them (Niezen 2000, 128–129; 2009, 17). In the same year that the UN Permanent Forum was created, the Norwegian Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples was founded. Each of these two forums began in the same moment of increased attention to Indigenous issues as a question of human rights.

The Forum directly replaced earlier, related programs within Norway when, during the first decade of the operation of the Sami Parliament, the state realized the opportunity and the need for more Sami involvement in international affairs, especially regarding Indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world. As such, the Forum came about within the context of legal developments in Sami recognition in Norway, as an outcome of those developments but also as an outcome of the engagement of Norwegian Sami people at the international scale (Sanders 1989; Minde et al. 2008).

Both development cooperation (also called development aid or assistance), and human rights emerged out of the concern that a form of global governance was needed in the wake of World War II. The concept emerged alongside the concept of human rights as they evolved from a universalist focus toward the protection of minorities' rights after

World War II. The international indigenous peoples' movement of the 1970s made its gains through reframing indigenous peoples' issues as a matter of rights to ongoing cultural distinctiveness and self-determination instead of rights to modernization through integration into the nation state, the discourse that predominated at the international scale during the earlier part of the 20th century (Rodríguez-Piñero 2005).

There is a voluminous literature on international law, development, and human rights.¹⁹⁰ However, much of this literature is normative and takes for granted the terms of its own existence. Critical anthropology of development (e.g. Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1991, 2012 [1995]; Mosse 2005, 2008, 2011, 2013; Li 2007; Pierre 2020; Schwittay 2011) is an exception to this overall pattern, as is some anthropological work on neoliberalism that addresses the rise of Indigenous (and other “ethnic” and “minority”) political mobilization concurrent with the rise of neoliberalism (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Graeber 2009, 92; Hale 2006; Hankins 2014; Li 2010). These works are not often cited by scholars writing in other disciplines that do not share the same denaturalizing impulse. Alongside terms like “development” and “human rights,” recognition is largely taken for granted as a concept in this literature. While such literature attention chronicles how recognition accomplished, it pays little attention to how it is experienced, especially over the long term.

In this chapter, I examine how Sami leaders and allied experts today experience the forms of recognition that Sami people—and Indigenous people more generally—have gained in recent decades. In focusing on experience of recognition—the overall focus of

¹⁹⁰ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to review in full the literature on these topics. On Indigenous rights in international law see Anaya (2004) and Rodríguez Piñero (2005); on development cooperation (the basics of what this term means; its history) useful sources include Alonso and Glennie (2015) and Alonso (2018).

this dissertation—my approach is distinctly different from other work on these sorts of settings, including other analyses of the history of the Forum itself (i.e., Minde 2000; Saugestad 2012a). In this chapter, I consider the sets of ideas and practices evident in the Forum as important outcomes of recognition in and of themselves, rather than limiting my idea of outcomes of the recognition struggles to the legal measures alongside which they originated. This complicates our understanding of the long-term effects of recognition, even where, as in Norway, the recognition of Indigenous peoples is understood as “successful” (Lien 2018, 12; Saugestad 2012a, 5). Rather than simply resolving “misrecognition” as presumed by liberal proponents of recognition measures (Taylor 1994), state measures for the recognition of Indigenous peoples generate a variety of outcomes or effects, including the creation of institutional spaces where concepts that organize thought and action can be reproduced, like the forum I examine here. While well-known forms of state recognition, like laws and regulations, may be notable for their fixity, the concepts that organize peoples’ orientations to Indigenous rights circulate through real social and political worlds that are neither fixed nor secure. Because of this contingency, where certain orientations to work on Indigenous issues prove durable, as I argue is the case for the Forum in Tromsø, their persistence merits a closer look. Where such durable orientations appear to be on the cusp of change, they merit analytical attention all the more.

Outline of the Chapter

This chapter consists of three sections in which I pursue distinct analyses. In the first section, I further establish three consensus approaches to work on “Indigenous

questions” at the Forum to which longtime forum members ascribe and which they endeavor to enact at the meeting. Then, in a second section, I turn to the historical roots of these practices and commitments. I argue that the approach to “Indigenous questions” evident at the meeting in 2016 is a durable orientation that was produced and reproduced—even made thinkable through terms like “Indigenous questions”—over the course of the history of Sami political struggle during the second half of the 20th century. This struggle was both importantly national and international in scale. Norwegian Sami actors took up influential roles at the international level, introducing some elements of their own experiences into international discourse. At the same time, this engagement at the international scale was important for how Sami academics, politicians, and experts talked about and pursued a vision of Sami self-determination at home. I argue that the Forum is a central site for the reproduction of these ideas and of the community that carries this orientation into the future, as they meet ever-changing conditions for studying and promoting the cause of Indigenous people in development. A particular way of understanding and approaching “Indigenous questions” is reproduced at the Forum through the community that is produced within this space. The concepts and practices of the Forum and its participants, though globally engaged, are also meaningfully tied to the Sami political project of the 20th century.

Having established the existence of this durable orientation and its history in the Sami recognition struggle, in the third section, I return to events of the meeting in 2016. I examine the reactions of longtime Forum members to the understanding of development articulated by the representatives of the state, employees of the Norwegian aid directorate, at the meeting. In the present of 2016, it is clear that though long-time Forum

members maintain the ideas, commitments, and connections that emerged out of Sami recognition, state actors who participate in the meeting do not share these underlying assumptions about how to approach Indigenous issues. Much of the meeting was taken up with Forum members' critique, frustration, and denouncement of state priorities as expressed by the two state representatives to participate in the final Forum meeting. The conflict between these state actors and the Forum participants during the course of the meeting reveals the weakening support today for the practices and institutions that the Norwegian state had played an active role in initiating and supporting when the Forum was founded fifteen years prior.

Ultimately, in this chapter I argue that the anxieties evident at the Forum are about more than just the closure of this single venue for discussion and knowledge-sharing. On a larger scale, participants' anxieties, disappointment, and affront about the Forum ending are also about the displacement of a long-existing conceptual framework in which Indigenous people are a central concern and allocated a particular, hard-won place in public discourse and decision making, both nationally within Norway and at the international level. Even though the Sami people's recognized status itself is not in question, the practices and concepts that make recognition meaningful are still open to transformation, even where Sami leaders and Indigenous peoples' advocates oppose those changes. In earlier chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 3 and 4), I examined how the meanings and entailments of recognition for non-federally recognized tribes in the United States were transformed during the period 1960–1990, not through overt challenges but through subtle transformation of the terms of engagement as a part of

larger political and economic changes. In this chapter, I show a similar transformation happening in the real time of my ethnographic fieldwork in Norway.

A Consensus Approach to “Indigenous Questions”

After the anthropologist’s ominous introduction, she adjourned us to the first of the coffee breaks that would punctuate the two-day-long Forum meeting. Muffled sounds of conversation emanated from the adjacent room where carafes and paper cups served their role in the phatic labor of the meeting.¹⁹¹ During the break, the President of the Sami Parliament arrived. Dressed in her brightly colored *gákti* and with a gracious smile, she greeted a number of the fellow attendees with hugs and laughter.

Other than these most widely known individuals, whom I could recognize from photos I had seen in the press, I didn’t know anyone at the meeting. I felt unsure how to break into the conversations, so, feeling a bit of a coward, I took my cup back to the classroom where we had heard the introductory remarks and busied myself with the contents of the registration folder, trying to familiarize myself with the norms of the Forum. The program outlined a schedule of three sessions over two days. Each session included between three and six presenters with their institutional affiliation and title of their presentation listed in the program. The first session was titled “Norwegian government policy and development strategies toward Indigenous peoples: Current trends and possibilities,” a more neutral framing of the issue the Forum’s board chair had just raised. The presenters in that session ranged from an academic affiliated with UiT; to someone from Norad, the Norwegian Development Aid directorate, to the president of

¹⁹¹ Elyachar (2010) and Manning (2012) have both written on the importance of phatic labor and on the connective channel that opens up in coffee-drinking in particular.

Norway's Sami Parliament. The second two sessions, set for the following day, had much shorter titles: "Session 2—Business and Indigenous Peoples" and "Session 3—The Way Forward." Fortunately for me, the presentations would be in English, a nod to the international scope, content, and audience of the meeting.

The printed program was in English, too, except for the little logo at the top of the page. Under a little icon of a rising sun, I read the Norwegian name for the Forum: "*Forum for Urfolksspørsmål i Bistanden*."¹⁹² Even with the limited Norwegian language skills with which I arrived in Tromsø in 2016, I understood that the word *urfolk* meant "Indigenous people" and that *spørsmål* meant "question" or "questions."¹⁹³ I understood the word enough to understand its translation to "Indigenous issues," a phrase that recurred across the presentations made over the Forum's two days.

On the surface, this term simply referred to any "issues" or "questions" that arose around the involvement of Indigenous peoples in development, their exclusion from such activity or problems that arose in engaging with development. However, over the course of the meeting, I observed that leaders at the Forum talked explicitly about the group's approach to "Indigenous questions" in terms of specific practices and commitments. And indeed, these were enacted at the meeting as well, forming a common or consensus approach to Indigenous issues among the Forum's longtime participants.

Several characteristics in particular stand out as part of the ongoing commitment to work centered on "Indigenous questions." First, the Forum members make Indigenous

¹⁹² The Norwegian word *bistand*, is often translated as "development aid"—a common phrase in English—but the word itself means mutual support. The Forum, in the English translation of its title did not use the phrase "development aid." Instead, it used the more precise translation "development cooperation," although there is also another way to say, more precisely, "development cooperation": *utviklingssamarbeid*.

¹⁹³ For neuter nouns in Norwegian, there is no difference in form between the singular indefinite form and the plural indefinite form. The word *spørsmål* (question/s) is one such word. Here, it is intended in the plural, as indicated by the absence of a singular article.

peoples—their lives, their cultures, their challenges—central to the work. Second, the Forum seeks to bring Indigenous peoples themselves into the work, while prioritizing capacity building and relationships of solidarity. Third, the Forum takes a broad view of development, guided by Indigenous peoples’ own challenges and priorities, as made evident through the first and second commitments.

“Diverse actors” and Indigenous Peoples Allocated an Active Role in the Work

The commitment to building a community of diverse actors at the point of intersection of development and Indigenous issues was already becoming apparent to me during that first coffee break. So many of the people in the room were clearly acquainted across the divisions of who worked in politics, civil society, or research. The Forum meeting was not limited to presentations in the classroom at UiT. It also involved a group dinner on the first day, catered lunches on both days, and coffee breaks throughout the meeting, during which people mingled and talked in a way the sessions’ format did not lend itself to. This schedule seemed to suggest attention to how getting together in person might help build connections and common understandings. The commitment to bringing together diverse actors was evident even in the registration folder. Its agenda featured presenters from civil society organizations, from the Rainforest Foundation, Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian aid directorate (Norad), academics, (both Indigenous and not), and Indigenous political leaders, including politicians from Sami Parliament and former representatives to the United Nations. It was clear that a distinctive aspect of the

Forum was the involvement of different perspectives rooted both in career field and personal positionality.¹⁹⁴

The inclusion of these different perspectives was enacted at the 2016 Forum meeting in terms of both who was there and how they engaged with others. But this diversity was also the topic of an overt account of the Forum's purposes and practices in a second introductory speech that followed the first coffee break. The Director of the Centre for Sami Studies took her place at the front of the room, smiling out at the assembled group. She wore a bright red fringed shawl around her shoulders and her sandy brown hair was cropped short, revealing silver dreamcatcher earrings. This shawl is, within the context of Northern Norway, an indicator of Sami-ness, one step short of full traditional dress, and the earrings served as a nod to international engagements in North America through the Director's work at UiT. In the Director's account of the history of the Forum, its purpose and its accomplishments, she focused on the kind of space the Forum had made for "diverse actors"—Indigenous peoples, development workers and managers, researchers—to come together. She listed a set of core questions "facing Indigenous peoples worldwide," and stated that the purpose of the Forum was not only to consider these questions academically but to involve Indigenous peoples in addressing them.

While the Director did account for the Forum's role in helping state actors understand the situations Indigenous peoples face—going "beyond statistics" to spotlight

¹⁹⁴ By the end of my fieldwork in Norway, this was a familiar feature of events related to Indigenous issues. One graduate of UiT's Master in Indigenous Studies program, who went on to take up a research position with the Centre for Sami Studies, pointed this out explicitly in an interview later in 2016. I had remarked on how there were many Norwegian as well as Sami researchers and scholars working on these issues in the same research center, and she told me that, in her view, this was a key commitment of the Centre for Sami Studies, the idea that "we need both" Indigenous researchers and non-Indigenous ones to make progress on these complicated issues and to make a public impact.

case studies—the Director ultimately emphasized the Forum’s role in helping Indigenous peoples and researchers alike to understand the state. “Through the Forum,” she said, “we have gained insight into state policies toward Indigenous peoples, often marked by tension and conflict.” This statement was ambiguous. It could have referred purely to the history of the Forum, but I would come to realize later that she might be hinting at the conflicts that would arise that afternoon when a speaker from Norad took the stage in the panel on decreasing state support for Indigenous participation in development aid.

After turning the typical expert gaze on its head to focus on the state, rather than on the “vulnerable population,” the Director ended her presentation with another reversal. She quoted from the opening speech that the Sami Parliament President, Aili Keskitalo, gave at a larger conference, Arctic Frontiers,¹⁹⁵ elsewhere on campus earlier that morning: “Indigenous peoples are part of the solution, not part of the problem.” Yes, the Forum was a venue for helping Indigenous peoples. But the Director clarified that this was not because Indigenous peoples themselves create problems. Instead, assistance is needed because Indigenous peoples are impacted by the problems others have created and might indeed have solutions to problems that affect us all.

Even as she narrated the centrality of Indigenous actors in the work of the Forum, the Director was evidence of it, too. As a Sami scholar herself and Director of the research center through which the Forum had long been organized, her statement only served to make explicit what her presence, her competence, and her fluency in the issues embodied in the room that day. Because the Director was the one quoting Keskitalo, it is unlikely that anyone would have taken that gesture as tokenism. But the fact that

¹⁹⁵ See Nilsen (2016) and Quinn (2016) for press coverage of the full speech and a sense of what Arctic Frontiers is.

Keskitalo was not only in the room but allocated a place on the program was further evidence that the Forum took Indigenous political leaders seriously and gave them a prominent role in outlining the Forum's purpose and project. In her presentation, not long after, Keskitalo spoke about the meaning of solidarity work, what she called "Indigenous diplomacy." Keskitalo was at the meeting for as long as other Tromsø engagements would allow and other representatives from the Sami Parliament were there throughout the two days. The commitment to centering Indigenous actors and their ideas at the Forum was clearly alive and well, even during the Forum's final hours.

Indigenous Peoples at the Center; Development an Open Question

Though the various presentations and discussions across the two days touched on a variety of topics (education, building relationships between global north and south, state funding structures and trends, business development), each was approached from the place where it intersected with Indigenous peoples' lives and concerns. In the discourse of those who had attended the Forum before, who were invested in its work, Indigenous peoples and their lives—understood holistically—were always central to the framing of the discussion. The event may have featured two topics, Indigenous peoples and development aid (or development cooperation), but the central topic was clearly Indigenous peoples, both the challenges they face and what they can contribute to bettering Norwegian development efforts around the world. Indigenous speakers across the two days talked about everything from the closure of the Norwegian embassy in Guatemala to the opportunities to work with the UN group addressing business and industry in the Arctic; presenters' contributions ranged not just over wide geographical

expanses but also across traditional silos like public and private sector. As long as the starting point was Indigenous peoples and the issues they face, the topic was accepted by the majority of attendees as logical to raise at the meeting, even if it were something as local and place-based as the impact of dry weather conditions on cattle herders in southern Africa.

Though Indigenous people remained at the center of the discussion, the second guiding theme of the Forum—development—was logically a part of each session and each presentation. But listening through the presentations by development workers, development managers, academics, and Indigenous leaders, it became clear to me just how broad the vision of development was among the Forum’s attendees. The presenter from Norwegian Church Aid spoke on the variety of projects that the large charitable organization conducts each year, which ranged from projects involving education, to healthcare, to disaster preparedness. A presenter from Norway’s Namibia Foundation spoke on the organization’s work providing culturally informed education to San children in Namibia. Only on the final day of the forum, in a session called “Business and Indigenous Peoples” did the presentations shift notably in the direction of talking about industrial development and capital investment as a major part of development. That session lacked any Norwegian presenters, instead featuring Canadian, Australian, and Russian academics.

This mixture of different approaches to development, involving everything from capacity building and education to emergency response and industrial development—in the worst cases, itself an emergency in Indigenous communities—demonstrates how even though the notion of Indigenous peoples at the Forum was taken for granted as the central

concept of the meeting, the concept of development was quite open. It was not a total surprise to observe this throughout the meeting. After all, in her opening speech, the Director of the Centre for Sami Studies, while naming concrete challenges Indigenous peoples face, like the reluctance of states to recognize collective rights, had raised development not as a fact but as a question: “What is equitable development?”¹⁹⁶

All three of these components—a clear focus on Indigenous peoples as a group with specific rights and various challenges, a commitment to involving diverse actors and prioritizing Indigenous peoples’ involvement, and an open, questioning stance on development—were shared by the majority of people who presented at the Forum and those who spoke in the discussions after each session and at the end of the meeting. Moreover, I see each of these three elements as linked to the historical approach to *urfolksspørsmål* that developed in Norway both out of the earlier experience of the movement for Sami recognition, in particular, and through the ways that Sami activists and their allies engaged with international events and institutions in the development of Indigenous rights.

Arriving at “Indigenous Questions” (*Urfolksspørsmål*)

What was not evident to me in the moment at the meeting was the degree to which the commitments and practices there drew on larger histories. Over the course of

¹⁹⁶ This statement is reflective of international rights discourse (human rights, minority rights, Indigenous rights), which shares this open orientation to development. However, this statement can also be read from the perspective of Sami history in Norway. The Alta hydroelectric dam project, opposition to which served as the catalyst for the recognition of the Sami as Indigenous people of Norway, was framed in terms of modernization and development as a good; Sami opposition to the dam in defense of reindeer herding helped raise major questions in Norway about development as an unmitigated good, a debate that still carries on today in Sami opposition to the development of wind power generation fields and mines justified by the need for green energy located in reindeer grazing areas (see, for example, Lysvold and Skeie 2020; Dannevig and Dale 2018; Hasselberg 2016; Lund et al. 2020; among others).

the following years of my continued research on the recognition of Sami people in Norway as Indigenous people, it became apparent to me that the very notion of “Indigenous questions” invoked in the Forum’s original Norwegian name had only become intelligible over the course of the longer history of Sami politics in Norway and Sami engagements with the pursuit of formal recognition of Indigenous rights at the international scale. In this section of the chapter, I account for this history in order to show how the orientation to Indigenous questions evident at the 2016 meeting, with its focus on the centrality of human rights, the participation of diverse actors, and an open concept of development, shows meaningful continuity with the longer history of Sami political engagement over the course of the second half of the 20th century. Because of this continuity, I understand the approach to Indigenous questions talked about and enacted at the 2016 meeting to be a durable orientation to Indigenous issues that is itself a meaningful outcome of the recognition history. I begin by tracing the origins of discussion of “Indigenous questions” (*urfolksspørsmål*) in Norway. The idea that Sami people are Indigenous people draws on a concept, Indigeneity, elaborated at an international scale. However, in Norway, discussions of “Sami questions” (*samespørsmål*) preceded and set the stage for later consideration of “Indigenous questions” (*urfolksspørsmål*) on a global scale. For Norwegian Sami people the link between the national and the global scale was such that the global discussion introduced new ideas to the Norwegian context, but Norwegian Sami political elites were also major contributors to the emergence of standards around Indigenous rights at the international level through their engagement with institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the

International Labor Organization (ILO), beginning in the 1970s (Sanders 1989; Rodríguez-Piñero 2005; Minde 2008; Minde et al. 2008).

Samespørsmål (“Sami question/s”)

Within Norway, debates over “Sami questions” (*samespørsmål*) were the catalyst for state engagement with Sami issues in the post-war era, yet even at this relatively early point in the recent political history, international ideas about minority rights as human rights were an important input into political debate within Norway.¹⁹⁷ At this time, many people, both in Finnmark and nationally, believed in a fundamental opposition between Sami cultural continuity and the integration of Sami people into the modern Norwegian nation. The idea of a “Sami question” was originally raised by those who set out to challenge the official policy of Norwegianization (*fornorskning*) that predominated in Norway from the mid 19th to mid 20th century.¹⁹⁸ In postwar Finnmark, these advocates both met with opposition and experienced success. Among the early successes, one could count the establishment of advisory councils: *Samisk Råd for Finnmark* (SRF, the Sami Advisory Council for Finnmark), an advisory board for decision-making in Finnmark county, in 1953, and *Nordisk Sameråd* (the Nordic Saami Council) in 1956. Both of these new consultative bodies included prominent advocates for Sami cultural continuance in the face of Norwegianization (Larsen 2012, 43–47; Minde 2003, 2005). These early advisory councils were both created on the premise that Sami people should be able to participate in decision-making that would affect them, whether at the level of an

¹⁹⁷ See Larsen (2012, 23) on important voices of this period, perhaps most chiefly Per Fokstad, who Larsen notes was familiar with international scale discourse from his education in Europe.

¹⁹⁸ For instance, the phrase “*det samiske spørsmål*” appears in a letter written by Sami teacher and advocate for Sami language and culture, Per Fokstad, when he wrote to a member of the government (*regjering*) about his ideas about the changes that should be made to school policies affecting Sami students (Larsen 2012, 27, citing the original letter kept at Samisk Arkiv: SA, FMF, Holt og Gabrielsen, Boks: 3413, Mappe: Diverse).

individual Norwegian county or at the level of Nordic regional politics. From the earliest postwar advocacy, Sami participation in decision-making was a clear emphasis in Sami politics (Lien 2018).

After prominent Sami voices openly challenged Norwegianization, proponents of the Norwegianization agenda started to write of *samiske spørsmål* (Sami questions) as well. In the most notable example, in the mid 1950s, the leader of the public broadcaster *Norsk rikskringkasting* wrote to the Ministry of Church and Education (*Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet* [KUD]) to ask for clarification on the way in which state institutions like his own should approach their work with *samiske spørsmål* (Kirke-og undervisningsdepartementet 1959, 5). In response, KUD launched the Committee on Sami Questions (*Komiteen til å utrede samespørsmål*) to examine the various dimensions of Sami issues in Norway through a public committee process.

Along with those selected to contribute their expert knowledge, the Sami Committee was substantially comprised of representatives from Sami organizations. The national civil society organizations related to Sami issues established in the 1940s—*Norske Reindriftsamers Landsforbund* (NRL, the Norwegian national organization of reindeer-herding Sami; North Sámi: *Norgga Boazolápmelaččaid Riikkasearvi*, NBR) and *Oslo Sami Sær'vi*¹⁹⁹—were invited to nominate representatives to the Sami Committee, as was the earliest advisory council, SRF. This fit the norm for such public committees in Norway at the time.²⁰⁰ The stakeholders selected through their organizations would join

¹⁹⁹ *Norske Reindriftsamers Landsforbund* (NRL, 1947) took the form of an industry organization for reindeer herding. *Oslo Sami Sær'vi* (1948) was established as an Oslo-based organization for those, both Norwegian and Sami, who were interested in Sami language and culture.

²⁰⁰ It should be noted, however, that such public committees had not before been founded to address Sami issues and involve Sami representatives, even though there had been national and pan-Sami organizing and organizations since the early 20th century (Lien 2018; Zachariassen 2012).

the information-gathering and recommendation-articulation process of the Sami Committee. The presence of Sami leaders on the committee investigating “Sami questions” further solidified the commitment to including Sami themselves in the work of researching the Sami situation and proposing reforms. The report of the Sami Committee (*Samekomiteen*), as it was called, touched on issues from the use of Sami language in schools to employment prospects, housing conditions, provisioning of electricity in Sami areas, and more. Many of the proposals addressed capacity building, proposing education and support for Sami farmers seeking to modernize or for the modernization of the reindeer herding industry, with the state providing financial and organizational support.

The idea that capacity building was an important element of the responsibility of the state to Sami people was mobilized early-on within the Norwegian Sami context but was deployed in the context of development, work that drew from international ideas about development and modernization. The ongoing, explicit focus on capacity building at the Forum in 2016 recalls the earliest events of the mid-20th century beginnings of a political and cultural revitalization among Norwegian Sami people and, for those Forum attendees with international experience, also draws to mind the ongoing use of this term in international development discussions the world over.²⁰¹

The Sami committee’s recommendations were not just one-sided, recommending that Sami people be educated in various industrial fields as a part of modernization; it also proposed the founding of a national Sami advisory council in Norway, suggesting there was a place for Sami participation in state decision-making to improve the ability of

²⁰¹ See Pierre (2020) for a recent anthropological critique of the centrality of this term in ostensibly well-meaning but effectively racist development discourse targeted toward Africa. Any awareness of this dynamic is lacking in sources on development cooperation from the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (e.g., Alonso and Glennie 2015).

the state to address the challenges of the Sami population.²⁰² Yet the Sami Committee's report, in certain passages, also retained the sense that the central "Sami question" was the question of whether or not the Sami population should be assimilated into the mainstream of Norwegian society or retain their cultural distinctiveness as "*en egen folkegruppe*" (their own ethnic group [Kirke- og utdanningsdepartementet 1959, 32]).

When the Sami Committee's report was released in 1959, the report was received in Sami communities primarily in terms of this central question, rather than in terms of the particulars of the concrete measures it proposed.²⁰³ It would be several decades before the meanings of *samespørsmål* would shift in a decisive way, away from questions around assimilation and toward the rights of Sami people as an Indigenous people within the nation-state of Norway. In this way, the developments around "Sami questions" within Norway mirror discussions of the "Indian question" in the Western hemisphere during the same period, which were also embraced by international organizations making early recommendations about the situation of Indigenous peoples, even though there was little thought at the time to the idea that such policies might apply to Nordic Indigenous populations.²⁰⁴

The change to the meaning of "Sami questions" within Norway was bound up in the emergence of a new wave of Sami activism in the 1970s, which as much as it

²⁰² This was one of only a small subset of recommendations in the report that was clearly implemented in the 1960s (Larsen 2012). After Parliamentary debate on the report in 1962, *Norsk Sameråd* (the Norwegian Sami Council) was established in 1964 as a consultative body for issues affecting the Sami population.

²⁰³ See Bjørklund's (2011) account of the *Påskeresolusjonen* (the Easter Resolution) in Karasjok, Finnmark in April 1960 and Larsen's (2012) discussion of how that event may have influenced the review of the Sami Committee Report by the KUD Committee in the Norwegian Parliament in 1962.

²⁰⁴ See Rodríguez-Piñero's (2005) discussion of the role of Latin American "Indigenism" in the early attention to the rights and treatment of Indigenous workers by the International Labor Organization (ILO) beginning in the early part of the 20th century. The ILO's recommendations and its first convention on what it has often called "Indigenous and tribal" people or populations took an integrationist stance, promoting the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the mainstream of postcolonial societies.

addressed local and national realities, was also engaged at the global level in ways that Sami activists had not been before. In the 1970s, the plans for the building of the Alta-Kautokeino hydroelectric dam and the flooding of the Sami village of Masi (North Sami, *Máze*) became the spark for renewed debate around Sami continuance versus modernization. And in those debates, *samespørsmål* arose again as a ready-to-hand concept for framing these political discussions. Take, for instance, the way an event organized by the Labour Party (*Ap*) in Vadsø fell back on the familiar convention. In an article titled “*To syn på samespørsmålet*” (“Two views on the Sami question”), readers of the Norwegian-language Sami newspaper *Ságat* could read through speeches by two Sami men from Finnmark.²⁰⁵ One supported the assimilation of the Sami population into the Norwegian mainstream as a part of the goal to modernize the local society for the best of all individual *finmarkinger* (people from the county of Finnmark). The other wrote of the collective cultural inheritance of the Sami, how this should be protected, and how Sami culture is not at odds with modernization.

Within each contribution—and certainly in reading across them—it is apparent that if there was a singular Sami question (*samespørsmålet*, **the** Sami question), then it was the same one that had underlain discourse about “*det samiske spørsmål* [sic]” as early as the 1940s (Per Fokstad, cited in Larsen 2012, 27): Should Sami people assimilate to the Norwegian mainstream, including by shifting their cultural and linguistic practices to match (ethnic) Norwegian norms, or should Sami culture be embraced, valued, and

²⁰⁵ Republished as online supplementary material to *Samisk Skolehistorie 6* (Lund et al. 2013), titled “*To syn på samespørsmålet*”: *Vadsø Arbeiderparti arrangerte 13.01.1971 et åpent møte om samespørsmål*. Under fellestittelen «To syn på samespørsmålet» trykte avisa *Ságat* 21.01.1971 begge innledningene fra dette møtet, av Henrik Ravna og Odd Mathis Hætta.”

fostered into the future? At that time, the question of what should happen to the village of Masi was talked about as derivative of this larger, singular question.

The Development of Expertise on “Sami Questions”

In 1968, the same year the Norwegian Supreme Court ruled on Sami rights to land and water and NSR (the Norwegian Sami Association, North Sami, *Norgga Sámiid Riikasearvi*; Norwegian, *Norske Samers Riksforbund*) was founded, the Norwegian Parliament decided to found the University of Tromsø.²⁰⁶ A central concept in the decision to create a new university in Tromsø was *landsdelsrelevans* (regional relevance), the idea that social sciences at new regional institutions should build on those areas where research was already underway locally, should take advantage of the region’s particular character, and should serve the region’s specific needs (*Instillingen* 1972, 81, cited in Ramstad and Saugestad 2015, 95). In accordance with *landsdelsrelevans*, Sami issues were considered part of the University of Tromsø’s responsibility and specialty from the very beginning. A Research Group for Sami Studies (*Forskningsgruppe for samiske studier*) was established as a part of the opening of the university in 1972 (Ramstad and Saugestad 2015, 93).

The University of Tromsø’s focus on “Sami questions” proved to be important in moving the meaning of the term definitively away from connotations with assimilation. The initial plans for the building of the Alta-Kautokeino dam were released just before the new university opened, and the debate over that project, and the issues of Sami territorial rights that it brought to the surface, only became more of a public debate over the following years. Interdisciplinary Sami research was an important part of the early

²⁰⁶ See Ravna (2021) for a recent English language publication that addresses this 1968 development, its context, and its role in the legal history on Sami right in Norway.

contributions of researchers in Tromsø, but the commitment to serving a pedagogical institution for Sami students was perhaps equally important.²⁰⁷ The university became an important center for Sami youth activism moving into the 1970s and 1980s as the university trained a new generation of Sami students studying in fields like social sciences, law, and education (Stordahl 2008). The university's role in serving Sami students was yet another reflection of the commitment to capacity building and increased participation of Samis in the national society that had united many of the institutional developments since the establishment of the first Sami advisory councils in the 1950s.

Within the space of the university, which *landsdelsrelevans* (regional relevance) and the Sami advocacy of the 1960s had together helped produce, the meaning of *samespørsmål* (Sami questions) solidified around the position of the Sami in Norway and how their cultural, linguistic, and political needs could be met, rather than the earlier way in which the term had been used to pose questions about the assimilation of Sami-speaking Norwegians into the national mainstream. By the early 1980s the predominant meaning of “Sami questions” had definitively shifted. Where *samespørsmål* were discussed, the discussion centered on how Norway should protect Sami rights as Indigenous rights, rather than whether or not the Sami population would be assimilated (NOU 1984:18). This new meaning for “Sami questions”—and the speech chain network in which it was elaborated and concretized—was critical to the emergence of a particular approach to “Indigenous questions” at UiT. This incorporated not just influences from

²⁰⁷ See Ramstad and Saugestad (2015) for further detail on the content of these contributions, which were the first to really examine the Sami minority situation, largely through the examination of existing historical records that had not been approached through such a lens before. For an account of some of key figures in the development of anthropology in the Sami context at Tromsø, see Bjørklund (2005) and Stordahl (2005).

Sami history in Norway but, increasingly, ideas from the international scale as well. Sami people from Norway were key contributors to promoting the idea that Indigenous rights should be recognized at the international scale (Minde et al. 2008; Sanders 1983). It can be difficult to pinpoint which ideas—like the aforementioned focus on capacity building—were understood as having developed within the Sami context or within international dialog. Many of the same actors were engaged at both levels and the emerging group of Sami scholars and experts adapted ideas from global literatures and political discourse to understand the Sami situation.²⁰⁸ This approach emerged in the 1980s and later as Norway increasingly considered the Sami to be an Indigenous people with rights described and protected by international conventions on Indigenous peoples and not just through the norms around the protection of linguistic and ethnic minorities that had emerged in Europe in the postwar era. Thus, Sami advocates had not only transformed the meaning of “Sami questions” from the 1950s to the 1970s, they also set the stage for the development of a related concept of “Indigenous questions (*urfolksspørsmål*),” which could be addressed through similar underlying practices and ethical commitments.

From “Sami Questions” to “Indigenous Questions” (*urfolksspørsmål*)

During the 1970s, Sami activists engaged with the global Indigenous peoples movement, both with international groups like the World Council for Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) and with individual leaders from Indigenous struggles elsewhere in the world

²⁰⁸ Describing these historical details is beyond the scope of this chapter, but Tsing’s (2005) description of how universal ideas are taken up in local contexts and transformed through the “friction” of their encounter with the specificity of local realities provides one way to conceptualize how, generally, this dynamic relationship between local and global scales played out.

(Crossen 2014, 2016, 2017; Minde 1996). Increasingly, the struggle for Sami rights was understood among politically engaged Sami people as a struggle for Indigenous rights (Magga 2014; Minde 1995). But when the Norwegian public became aware of the Sami opposition to the Alta Dam, a development that proved decisive for the Sami rights struggle, they at first saw it as a national issue, not primarily as an international one.²⁰⁹ It was Sami activists who continued to push for recognition of their rights as Indigenous rights in an international sense, and developments in that area were ongoing throughout the 1980s.

Sami leaders were aware of the longstanding Norwegian commitment to international norms. They sought to leverage the moral authority of Norway's commitment to its reputation on the world stage in their pursuit of Sami rights.²¹⁰ By

²⁰⁹ I draw this observation from interviews in 2019 with two state employees who were closely engaged in the Sami rights developments of the 1980s.

²¹⁰ This was raised in several of the interviews I conducted with longtime bureaucrats in the ministries in 2018 and 2019 and is reflected also in an oral history interview with long-time NSR leader Ole Henrik Magga, published in 2014: "*Etter hvert så fikk vi jo til det som jeg bruker å si var en ambisjon fra starten av, her burde Norge være i fronten. Det brukte vi jo alle argumenter for, å få norske representanter til å ta den utfordringen. Norge må være best i klassen, det må dere vel være enige i? Vi kan ikke være dårligst her. Og det gjorde jo at norske representanter – jeg tror ikke de var så barnslige at de gjorde det bare for vi sa det, men de tok det veldig alvorlig det der at Norge har en tradisjon med Fridtjof Nansen og det ene med det andre og den gamle tenkningen om idealer som Norge har stått for i internasjonalt arbeid*" (Magga 2014) (My translation: Eventually we got to what I am in the habit of saying was an ambition from the start, here Norway should be at the forefront. We used all the arguments in getting Norwegian representatives to take on that challenge. Norway must be the best in the class, you all must agree with that, right? We cannot be the worst here. And that made Norwegian representatives—I do not think they were so childish that they did it just because we said so, but they took it very seriously that Norway has a tradition with Fridtjof Nansen and all that, the old thinking about the ideals that Norway has stood for in international work.) It is also worth noting that during the Alta protests, the Prime Minister was Gro Harlem Brundtland, a Labor party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) politician and Norway's first woman prime minister, who later was herself involved in leadership roles at the UN and WHO when not serving two further terms as prime minister. It was Brundtland who would later be much-quoted for saying in a 1992 New Year's speech during a later term as Prime Minister that it is "typically Norwegian to be good" ("*Det er typisk norsk å være god*") and therefore the Norwegian people should not be worried about their ability to hold their own in the international arena (NRK Skole – Læreriike programmer og klipp 2015). Magga's remarks in the 2013 oral history interview may reflect the way that this Brundtland quote has become part of Norwegian national consciousness in the years since it was uttered. His placing that idea within the context of the 1980s, however, likely also demonstrates its deep roots, present in the first Brundtland government as much as the third. The history of Norwegian investment in international engagement traces back to the earliest period of Norwegian national independence. In the first part of the 20th century, when Norway was

the 1980s, the Sami issue was widely understood as an international issue—an Indigenous rights issue—not just as a national issue within Norway. At that point, one could speak not just of “Sami questions” but of “Indigenous questions” as the kind of concerns that Norwegian society and authorities should consider and take action on.²¹¹

In the 1980s, state decisions began to reflect this international dimension, and the central concerns. A commitment to capacity building, which had already guided much of the work on the Sami situation in Norway, continued to be major concerns in international human rights and development discourse and was joined by a meaningful focus on the *participation* of affected groups by the 1980s. These concerns continued to serve as prominent justifications for action steps taken to address “Indigenous questions” in Norway. The release of a first Norwegian formal policy on Indigenous issues (*Det norske urfolksprogrammet*) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1983 was one major early step (Utenriksdepartementet 2004; Saugestad 2012a; Minde 2000). Around this same time, Sami people from Norway played an important role in the establishment of the Indigenous peoples working group at the United Nations (Sanders 1989; Minde et al. 2008). By the end of the 1980s, the enthusiasm for Indigenous rights among political leaders in Norway became such that the country was the first in the world to ratify a new

a newly independent nation, one of their early national heroes, the polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen, took an active role in the League of Nations. Then, in the post-war era, former foreign minister Trygve Lie served as the first secretary general of the United Nations from 1946 to 1952, sealing the Norwegian commitment to these international spaces (Leiren 2005). Of interest in regard to the discussion of the Third World movement discussed in Part I, Norway also took an active role as a mediator between East and West in the post WWII era, at least before the implementation of the Marshall Plan (Leiren 2005).

²¹¹ Such questions are referred to using a related lexical item: *samfunns spørsmål*, which translates to “societal questions,” a common way of referring to moral questions or questions of democratic integrity in Norway.

International Labor Organization Convention on the Rights of Indigenous People when it was presented in 1989 (International Labour Organization 1989).²¹²

Following a campus reorganization in the late 1980s, the university, in accordance with its mandate to serve the Sami population of Northern Norway, founded an interdisciplinary *Senter for Samiske Studier* (Centre for Sami Studies) in 1992. The following year, during the United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples (another outcome of Indigenous internationalist efforts), the Sami Centre hosted a major international conference, *Indigenous Peoples and Self-Government*, later described as one of the year's most important events (Brandtenberg 1995; Minde 2000). During this period, the Centre for Sami Studies also built an international collaboration with a Guatemalan university, focused on capacity building with Indigenous people in that country (Minde 2000). Effectively, the longstanding emphasis on capacity building for Sami students and researchers evolved into international projects with the same commitments applied toward building north-south Indigenous solidarities. This was, in part, what Sami academics and politicians did with the recognition granted them in the 1980s and 1990s: They built transnational connections and advocated for Indigenous rights internationally

By the mid-1990s, "Indigenous questions" was a thinkable focal concept not only for political action but for expertise, and the University of Tromsø had developed into an important locus of knowledge production on Indigenous issues. The university's pedagogy focused on seeing the Sami situation from an international and comparative

²¹² In an expert interview with one of the state employees who worked on Indigenous issues for the Ministry of Justice in the 1980s, this was pointed out as a premature ratification because Norway did not at the time actually fulfill the stipulations of the convention. I draw the characterization of the enthusiasm for Indigenous rights during that moment from the way this period was remembered by the small set of expert interviewees I was able to speak with about their experiences during this era.

standpoint. Professors and advisors encouraged students to travel abroad and learn about the situations of Indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world in order to return and see the Sami situation in a new light (Ramstad and Saugestad 2015, 98).

When, in 1997, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed a committee to evaluate its *Urfolk i Bistand* (Indigenous Peoples in Development Cooperation) program of 1983, they viewed faculty from the University of Tromsø as the logical choice for the membership of the committee because of their established expertise on Indigenous issues. One of the suggestions from the evaluation committee was the founding of a “roundtable” (Minde 2000, 28) to bring together researchers, development workers, and Indigenous stakeholders around “Indigenous questions” in development. That suggestion was taken up in the Ministry’s follow-up report, where the Ministry requested that a forum be founded at the University of Tromsø to serve that purpose.

The “follow-up plan” (*Oppfølgingsplan for urfolk i bistanden*) released by the Ministry included two more mandates in addition to the establishment of the Forum in Tromsø. The first of these was to engage the still-new Sami Parliament in development aid work. The second was “to provide support on Indigenous peoples, capacity building through education and participation of Indigenous peoples in research programs and international collaboration” (Saugestad 2012a, 4, her translation of *Oppfølgingsplan for urfolk i bistanden*). These three commitments in the follow-up plan (*oppfølgingsplan*) also appeared in a government white paper, *Stortingsmelding nr. 21 (1999/2000) Mennesverd i sentrum* (Focus on Human Dignity) (Saugestad 2012a, 4). Goals of capacity building and involvement of Indigenous peoples are clear throughout the state documents from the time that the Forum had its first meeting in Tromsø in 2000 under

the administrative auspices of Norad, the Norwegian Development Aid directorate (Minde 2000, 30), thereby demonstrating continuity with the approach to Sami and Indigenous questions that was already well-elaborated among academics in Tromsø.

In the late 1990s, “Indigenous questions” were already a topic of inquiry within institutions of expertise, with the University of Tromsø at the center of the picture. At that time, prioritizing Indigenous questions was a way of focusing attention on the situation of Indigenous peoples globally, supporting one another in solidarity, and for Norway to do its part as a small but wealthy nation to lift up Indigenous people in less-developed countries. This was a kind of dual-development, including both economic development and the development of policies addressing problems like the fair treatment of an Indigenous minority, drawn from Sami peoples’ international engagements with human rights and Indigenous rights. The concept of Indigenous questions, and the idea to approach them through collaboration and capacity building, had developed from and continued to resonate with “Sami questions.” The Forum emerged from some of achievements of the Sami struggle for recognition of their rights to self-determination both within Norway and internationally. In this way, it was an outcome of recognition. However, as I have demonstrated in this review of the history, the practices and commitments explicitly embraced at the Forum had also emerged through the engagements of Sami actors seeking to define and protect Indigenous rights.

Concepts like capacity building and participation of Indigenous people as a part of the solution have long histories in human rights and development discourse both within Norway and at the international level. Similarly, the broad notion of development embraced by the longtime members of the Forum is one that emerged through the history

of development and human rights as dual concerns of international governance. These ideas were developed in no small part at the United Nations, where the concerns of Indigenous peoples were taken up at first through the creation of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in 1985 and later through the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, established in 2000 (Niezen 2009, 12; United Nations 2021), the same year the Forum in Tromsø began its work.²¹³ Accomplishments at the United Nations, to which Sami people from Norway contributed, were critical to the creation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP 2007), which formally recognized the rights of Indigenous peoples at the international level. Shortly after the United Nations voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Declaration in 2007 (114 nations in favor, 4 against, 11 abstentions [United Nations General Assembly 2007]), prominent Norwegian and Sami academics wrote that, “[a] page was turned in indigenous peoples’ history when . . . the General Assembly of the United Nations with an overwhelming majority voted to adopt the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” (Minde et al. 2008, 1).²¹⁴

This history of recognition achieved by degrees, over decades, and only recently reaching a long-awaited moment of international acknowledgment informs the way that

²¹³ In my research, I did not find any concrete account for how the group, initially described as a roundtable (according to Minde 2000), came to be called a forum, but it is highly possible that this change referred directly to the language being used to describe the Permanent Forum at the international scale, a possible strategy for underlining the role and legitimacy of a forum on Indigenous peoples and development cooperation within the Norwegian context.

²¹⁴ In a moment of optimism following the adoption of the Declaration, preeminent Sami historian Henry Minde and his colleagues wrote that “Issues of principal importance for the world’s indigenous peoples have now been settled. The highest authority of global governance has stated that indigenous peoples have basic human rights and these rights must be respected and adhered to at every level of governance—from global to the local. But the final page in this narrative will not be turned until the principles of the Declaration are acted upon. Thus, much remains to be done before indigenous peoples have obtained the justice that a sizable majority of the United Nations members have acknowledged that they are entitled to when they voted in favour [sic] of the Declaration” (Minde et al. 2008, 1).

Sami participants and Indigenous advocates at the Forum received the news that the Forum would, after all, no longer receive state support. In the final section of this chapter, I turn back to the present of the 2016 meeting to examine how Forum members confronted the end of the funding to the Forum. Here I have established that the Forum itself was an outcome of the recognition struggle and that it provided a space for people to circulate and reproduce core commitments developed during that history. In the final section of the chapter, I turn to the experience of state disinvestment in the Forum's and with it its principles, and I consider how the reasons for this change, as in the Nipmuc case discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, are rooted not in direct opposition to Indigenous rights but rather in more encompassing changes to underlying assumptions about the role of the state in securing prosperity and the protection of the moral good.

The Consensus Contested

In addition to the three commitments I outlined in the first section of this chapter, which constituted a consensus understanding about how to approach “Indigenous questions,” there is a final notable commonality that united the Forum attendees at the meeting in 2016. All were gravely concerned—*anxious, frustrated, or even in despair*—about the changes in the state's support for work on Indigenous issues. These concerns were centered not just on work in Indigenous contexts generally, but in the longstanding tradition of work on *urfolksspørsmål* to which the Forum participants displayed ongoing commitment. The end of funding for the Forum and the possibility that this represented a broader shift away from the prioritization of Indigenous issues more generally came up over and over again throughout the two days of the conference, even when it was not the

topic designated on the program. Those organizing the conference were strict about time limits and did try to keep the group to the agenda, but even in the final discussion at the end of the last day of the meeting, this topic—about how resources were no longer being dedicated to Indigenous issues—was still in the air. At that point, the long-time Forum attendee moderating that session made a plea to the room: “No more questions about funding or money!”

Though ongoing commitment to a particular understanding of how to approach *urfolksspørsmål* in development cooperation was evident in the initial framing of the meeting, it became all the more apparent through the contrast between Forum members’ consensus and the opposing assumptions evident in the discourse of the Norwegian Development Aid directorate (Norad) staffers, the only representatives of the Norwegian state to attend the meeting. In the next section, I put the stance and assumptions of the speakers from Norad in dialog with longtime Forum members’ reactions. I do this in order to highlight even more clearly the way a common orientation to “Indigenous questions” is at the root of the Forum’s work and constitutes its own important product of the recognition of the Sami by the Norwegian state. By the end of this section, it will be clear that this durable orientation to advocacy for Indigenous peoples is an outcome of a recognition history that is vulnerable to erosion, even where recognized status remains unchanged. Changes to the priorities and foundational assumptions of the state partners who have historically made a venue like the Forum possible present a threat to the ability of Forum members to carry on in a community that embraces the values and practices of their approach to “Indigenous questions.”

The State's Stance

In the first session at the Forum conference, six speakers addressed the topic “Norwegian government policy and development strategies toward Indigenous peoples.” Alongside two academics, the Sami Parliament President, and two aid workers from Norwegian civil society organizations, a representative from Norad was also included in this first session. He was invited to the meeting to speak on behalf of the Director about the current priorities and practices at the Norwegian Aid Directorate, Norad, and the role representatives of the state had played all along in the Forum’s history. However, the way he talked about development and his and his colleague’s advice for how Forum members should respond to the lack of funding for their work revealed that the predominant standpoint at Norad not only failed to share, but actively contradicted, the core commitments other Forum members held in common.

Underlying Assumptions at Norad

Nils,²¹⁵ a senior advisor in Norad’s private sector development department, took the podium in his suit and tie and sharp Oslo haircut.²¹⁶ He stood out from the rest of the

²¹⁵ Nils is a pseudonym. I use a pseudonym in part because this figure was treated as a representative of the state, of his directorate, Norad, by those at the meeting rather than as an individual. He had never been to the Forum before and did not have prior relationships with the Forum attendees. I use a first name to reflect the fact that this is how people address one another in Norway, even in formal settings like this kind of Forum, and even where the person is bureaucrat. As a part of a commitment to an egalitarian society (see Bendixsen et al. 2018), Norwegians have for generations dispensed with the use of titles (equivalents of Mr. and Mrs.) and use first names. I use Keskitalo’s last name here as it is the convention in news media and to highlight her position as an elected representative at the meeting. Similarly, I use Saugestad’s last name because I refer to her statements at the meeting and her written works in this chapter; at the meeting, everyone who referred to her used her first name. Though I have not included the names of most of the NGO workers, many of them introduced themselves by their first names at the outset of their presentations.

²¹⁶ Walking through downtown Oslo during other parts of the fieldwork for this dissertation, I would walk past several downtown hairdressers, where men in suits would be getting their hair cut before morning meetings, most of them getting it cut in precisely the same style, short on the sides and a bit longer on top. Oslo is the city with the most expensive men’s haircuts in the world (Davidson 2021), and yet it is common in Oslo for professional men to have impeccable, short haircuts. This style/practice is not as ubiquitous in Tromsø, or perhaps it is just less visible because it is not as segregated by class as Oslo. Nils looked very recognizable as a bureaucrat or businessperson and yet, in being so recognizable within the setting of the

gathering, who were either a bit more casually dressed or appearing in their *gákti*. Despite his polished appearance, Nils did not seem as confident in his role as other speakers had. He began his presentation with a disclaimer, “Indigenous peoples are not an issue I deal with on a daily basis.” This statement served at once to relate his own presentation to the premises of the meeting—that “Indigenous peoples” can be thought of and treated as a central “issue”—and to distance his own position from those premises.

By his own admission, it was his first time at the Forum and he followed the Director’s articulation of what representatives of the state should contribute to the Forum, providing an update on Norad’s priorities, current challenges, and what this might mean for Forum participants. However, his contribution went beyond offering transparency or a kind of capacity building for attendees. Nils’s presentation also made clear that some of the central assumptions at Norad, evident in his explanations, were starkly at odds with the stance of the longtime Forum participants. His contribution near the beginning of the meeting provided a focal point for the articulation of disagreement, disappointment, frustration, and even despair throughout the meeting in regards to the changes in the Norwegian state’s handling of Indigenous issues.

Nils led with a first slide titled, “Aid has become less important.” He explained that the older idea of aid, of donor countries provided funds, resources, and capacity-building directly to developing nations, is less central to what Norad does these days. Instead, the current approach at Norad is that “we should use aid really, really smart to trigger other types of capital investment, more important than foreign direct investment.” This is the dominant thinking now among all “donor countries,” not just Norway. Indeed,

Forum, he was out of place; his appearance meant something different according to the metapragmatic model linking persona, event, and signs (Silverstein 1993; Wortham 2006, 32).

the marketization of development aid is a phenomenon noted by a range of scholars from anthropologists, who critique this newest framing of development (e.g., Elyachar 2005; Schwittay 2011), to economists who laud the shift, naming market liberalization as the major goal of development (e.g., Heckelman and Knack 2008).²¹⁷

If the consensus within Nils's world was that development is primarily a narrowly economic objective, that stance directly contradicted the openness of the concept of development employed at the Forum. For Nils (and by his account Norad and all donor countries' aid agencies), development is narrowly economic and dependent on attracting just the kind of foreign direct investment without any rooting in the local social fabric that has been, and in many places continues to be, a problem for Indigenous peoples on whose territory that development takes place.

Though Nils was careful throughout the two days to position himself as a bureaucrat, someone who serves whichever political parties are in power, in trying to explain the priorities at Norad at the moment Nils became the voice of the government in that UiT classroom. Through his statements—and their reception in the room—it started to become clear that this might be a source of tension, even conflict with the Forum attendees. For instance, by way of explaining the current government's priorities, he relied on their own framing of their strategy as “a human rights-based approach, even in dealing with Indigenous peoples.” The “even” in this statement, it soon became clear, reflected a way in which he called upon an older universalist framing of human rights,

²¹⁷ Scholars who study development aid specifically have noted in 2015 that a question had arisen as to what was meant by the phrase, with two major meanings in circulation: “In some quarters, the term development cooperation remains almost synonymous with financial aid, or, even more narrowly, with ODA (“official development assistance”). At the other extreme, development cooperation may be defined very broadly, to include, for instance, market flows (i.e., “remittances or foreign direct investment” [Alonso and Glennie 2015, 1]). Even this mapping out of terms ignores the possibility of a larger moral mission for development more like the view expressed by Forum members.

rather than incorporating the contemporary human rights discourse in which most Forum participations were well-versed, in which Indigenous peoples have distinct rights, outlined most notably in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Declaration, among other things, outlines the ways in which the situation of Indigenous peoples calls for special protections, different from those of other groups or minorities, and grounded in a different justification, what Minde et al. (2008) have characterized as a dual justification of equity and justice. Even before the adoption of UNDRIP, scholars of international law emphasized the distinctions around Indigenous rights as a unique element of international human rights law (Anaya 2004; Rodríguez-Piñero 2005). For Nils, Indigenous peoples were not a special central focus exempted from the ups and downs of politics, the “trends” to which the anthropologist had referred in her opening speech.

The fact that Nils considered Indigenous people to be no different from other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups was apparent in a second element of his presentation. Nearing the end of his allotted time, Nils advanced the slide on the wall behind him to reveal a photo from recent news coverage, a picture of Syrian refugees. He turned to look at the photo himself, then, after a short silence, he looked out at the audience in the classroom, addressing us directly. “I think you know why I’m showing this,” he said.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ This may have been a reference to the voluminous public debate and press coverage of the situation of Syrian arrivals in Norway at that time (e.g., Reisdal and Senel 2015; Bendixen and Svein 2016). When I arrived to begin my fieldwork in Norway in 2016, the country was reeling from the arrival of a wave of Syrian refugees during 2015, many of whom arrived as asylum seekers rather than through the UN quota system of which the Norwegian public had historically been more accepting. I arrived in Tromsø on a Monday in 2016, and the very first Saturday I was in the city, I came across a protest in favor of accepting more Syrian refugees and doing more to help them. This was very much *the* topic in the news at the moment of the 2016 Forum meeting.

Some, he explained, may have predicted the influx of refugees from the war in Syria, but many did not, and now 20% of the 2016 Norwegian aid budget will go to refugees in Norway. Refugee resettlement in Norway is always a part of the budget, he explained, but nothing near the sums dedicated to it this year.²¹⁹ He broke down the numbers, demonstrating the reallocation from other projects; the UN and multilaterals, renewable energy, the climate and forest initiative, and regional allocation would each take a budgetary hit.

Concluding the presentation with this information certainly fit the role allocated for representatives of the state at the Forum—explaining the current context and priorities—but it also reveals a conflict. Not only did Nils draw an implicit parallel between Indigenous peoples and other minorities, one that treats the two groups *as* minorities, his comparison also treated the refugees as a problem, quite contrary to the assertion from the Forum’s director, earlier, “Indigenous peoples are part of the solution, not part of the problem.”

After explaining the budget crunch related to the refugee crisis, Nils at last made a direct statement about the topic of the session at hand, the defunding of Indigenous issues in Norwegian budgetary decisions. “I do not think that it is intentional,” he said. “It is a political decision, basically. Of course, there are different interest groups when it comes to the Norwegian aid budget . . . [and] political pressure sometimes affects the outcome when it comes to funding.” As he had noted earlier in this presentation, while other “donor countries” generally have regional strategies and ten-year plans, in Norway, “it is more politically driven.” Parliament gives the order for allocation of funds for different

²¹⁹ Norway is among the nations that gives the most to development aid in Third World countries, a reality of which everyday Norwegian citizens are quite aware (Gullestad 2004, 182).

purposes and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does the implementation. White papers generally point the direction, but it is a complex picture with lots of commitments of one, three, and five years or more. If you want to move the direction of these plans, he suggested, “it’s like sailing a tanker;” it takes time to make a change in course.

Nils presented a Norad that will respond to whatever political pressure is the most urgent at the moment, treating different “interest groups” differentially, based on the extent to which each succeeded in affecting politicians’ priorities, rather than the extent to which that population had rights to participation through international human rights standards. This was a clear departure from the idea that the Forum would be used to build relationships between state actors and those working on Indigenous issues as a part of both national-scale recognition measures, like creation of the Sami Parliament and the involvement of the Sami Parliament in Norwegian foreign affairs, and the growing recognition of Indigenous rights at the global level, through the United Nations, the International Labor Organizations and other institutions.

Later in the meeting, the change from the earlier mandate to the current frame of Indigenous peoples and their allies as an interest group became even more clear. A second Norad employee made a presentation via Skype in the final session on how the Forum could move its mission forward, despite its formal dissolution. That presenter, by contrast to Nils, had been a member of the Forum prior to his employment with Norad. He nonetheless concurred with Nils that it would be necessary for the Forum members to advocate for their concerns with the government. “You have to make something a political priority,” he stressed, before adding, “you have a slight disadvantage in that you are not in Oslo . . . [but] even for people in Oslo, it takes months for lobbyists to get

meetings.” The location of the Forum in Tromsø, where Sami organizations are well connected and Sami concerns are a prominent part of institutional agendas, had originally been one of the reasons that the state asked for the Forum to be founded there. At that time, the framing of the endeavor had been on a national basis, founded on the idea of both fair and mutually beneficial involvement of the Sami in Norwegian foreign affairs. By 2016, state actors were talking about the Forum’s location in Tromsø as a liability.

UiT continues to represent itself as an Indigenous university (Stordahl 2008).²²⁰ At the same time, Tromsø is marketed as a destination for Sami cultural tourism (Utsi 2015; West 2019; Karlstrom 2020; Gardiner 2021). The value of the city as a Sami place is understood more readily in terms of market value for its exotic ethnic distinctiveness, rather than as a northern counterpart to Oslo, two nations’ among many on a world stage. Other anthropologists have pointed out this shift toward new ways of seeing Indigenous (or ethnic) distinctiveness as a form of value-added, rather than as a symbolic resource for the articulation of national solidarity²²¹ However, few of these authors have written on

²²⁰ While Stordahl (2008) wrote about this situation a decade earlier, a cultivated impression of UiT as a Sami university was a main observation during my fieldwork in 2016 – 2019, a striking difference from the setting of my fieldwork in Massachusetts. Participant observation at UiT, however, revealed that though Sami employees at the university engaged with the university’s notion of itself as a Sami university, they also, at least on occasion, viewed such efforts with a degree of ambivalence and even a wry sense of humor. In one case, I recall colleagues at the university discussing a commemorative wooden cup that the university had had produced for its 50th anniversary. The cup gave a strong sense of the idea of UiT as a Sami university; it was a recognizable Sami shape, and made of wood, constructed to be hung from a belt. However, when someone tried to actually use one, she couldn’t drink the coffee! The taste of the cup was so overpowering and disgusting that she couldn’t manage more than one sip. Though the university had produced and distributed something that looked like an authentic Sami cup, it couldn’t actually be used. The colleagues mused about a cup that you couldn’t actually drink from, noting that maybe the owner would need to allow it to sit with coffee in it, letting the taste sink into the wood. Providing something that looks like the real thing is easier than providing something that people can use, that performs like the real thing. This discussion about the cup highlighted for me the gap between the efforts to project an image of a Sami university and the distance that still remained to be bridged to avoid a reaction of bemusement from actual Sami individuals.

²²¹ See Duchêne and Heller (2012) on a shift from “pride” to “profit; Graeber (2009, 92), Povinelli (2002), and Hale (2006) on the compatibility of neoliberalism and multiculturalism; and Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) on new ways of valuing ethnicity under neoliberalism.

how these shifts upend the expectations of those who have long engaged in struggles for formal political recognition, who have had every indication that they had won, that an exception had been made for them, only to find that the same neoliberal dictates are wielded as reasons that established outcomes of that recognition will be deprioritized and defunded.

Reactions to the State's Stance

The speakers from Norad stuck closely to the role that had been outlined for them in the introductory speeches about the Forum, providing the opportunity for capacity building among attendees about how a directorate of the Norwegian state functions and what that might mean for Forum participants and their goals. However, as he tried to explain this, he also, seemingly unknowingly, highlighted his own underlying ideas about whether Indigenous peoples were a central or peripheral concern; whether Indigenous peoples should be actively engaged in the *work* of development cooperation, not just its *outcomes*; and his definition of development contradicted the consensus views among the other “diverse actors” at the Forum. Many of these underlying assumptions about the nature of political engagement and the role of the state positioned Indigenous peoples as just another ““interest group,” betraying the principle that Indigenous peoples, because they have a special recognized status, should not be subject to political “trends,” the idea that they, in fact, constitute an important, if limited, exception to the norms of neoliberalism imposed on everyone else (Hale 2006, 35; Graeber 2009, 92).

Forum members’ reactions to the distinct set of assumptions that the Norad representatives brought to the meeting made even clearer how Forum participants

continued to be committed to their own approach to addressing Indigenous issues in terms of *urfolksspørsmål* (Indigenous questions), as a part of the political tradition that had delivered recognition to Norwegian Sami as Indigenous people. Speakers defended these commitments fiercely, even as the possibilities for continuing that work through the venue of the Forum seemed hopelessly compromised by the departure of state partners from these once commonly held commitments. The reactions of the longtime Forum members to the Norad speakers' contributions highlighted how much the state's current orientation to the Indigenous issues at the heart of the Forum had changed over time, and what a problem this shift was for the Forum members' work. These expressions of disagreement, disappointment, and frustration help put into clear relief the stakes of the shift away from a particular and long-held orientation to "Indigenous questions."

Not Just Another Interest Group: The Forum's Work as a Moral Commitment

Both Norad representatives suggested that the Forum members would need to advocate for work on Indigenous issues with politicians if they wanted to see this work supported in the future. Other forum participants, though, spoke back strongly against this framing. The very first speaker at the event, the American anthropologist and Forum board chair, had stated that internationally recognized Indigenous rights were "not a trend" and support for them should not wax and wane with political shifts. The Norad representative's statement that Indigenous peoples' involvement in development is "a political decision, basically" was directly at odds with her formulation and seemed to trigger others to speak back to the assertion that the Forum should operate as an interest group advocating politically for what they thought was important.

Aili Keskitalo, President of Norway's Sami Parliament, explained the Sami commitment to solidarity work with Indigenous peoples in poorer countries as a responsibility to others: "We feel obligated to this work because we live in one of the richest countries in the world." Her vision was not of the Forum members advocating for their own interests; in her view this solidarity work could only be done well on long timescales and with the appropriate financial support: "It is not only about being able to travel to a meeting. If you are going to achieve anything in that meeting, you have a great work of preparation and community engagement before and after." Her goal was that Indigenous peoples could come to "speak with one voice" through "Indigenous diplomacy." In a firm, patient tone of voice she highlighted the stakes of the loss of the Forum and its solidarity work. She expressed the fear not that Norwegian Sami voices would not be heard, but that other Indigenous voices would be silenced: "I fear a future in which the only Indigenous voice at the international level is the Sami Parliament of Norway."

Though she did not mention it directly, Keskitalo alluded to the fact that because the Norwegian Sami Parliament is funded through the Norwegian central government and has a limited budget, they need additional support to pursue this international work. Back when the Forum was founded in 2000, involving the still-new Sami Parliament in aid work was one of the motivating factors for replacing the Indigenous Peoples in Development Aid (*Urfolk i Bistand*) program of 1983 with the Forum (*Oppfølgingsplan for urfolk i bistanden*, cited in Saugestad 2012a, 4). The Forum was, at that time, a common project between the Sami Parliament and the Norwegian authorities. It was an

outcome of the state's acknowledgment of the Sami as Indigenous people and an adjunct to the creation of the Sami Parliament itself.

The creation of a *space* in which these practices, traditions, and commitments could be reproduced and long-term goals could be pursued was a key part of the Forum's format. The Forum provided a space in which those involved had a kind of self-determination over the terms of the discussion and could reproduce or subtly transform their own practices and aims through ongoing collaboration and discussion. The dual approaches of capacity building and fostering durable, solidarity-based collaborations that Keskitalo spoke of were longstanding approaches to fulfilling the Forum's task of providing a venue for the capacity building and engagement of Sami political leadership in international affairs. Neither capacity building in Northern Norway nor undertaking solidarity work internationally were particularly compatible with functioning as an interest group in Oslo in the way the Norad representatives had suggested. While the Forum members understood capacity building as a collaborative affair, if the Norad representatives understood it at all as a goal of development, they understood it in the sense of those at the center (or the top) of a system imparting wisdom to those at the periphery (or the bottom), a kind of development discourse that anthropologists have directly critiqued for its role in perpetuating racial hierarchies (Pierre 2020).

Results Versus Relationships

Where the Forum's approach put relationships at the center, the Norad speakers often foregrounded "results." Indeed, according to those who had been funded by Norad in the past, the reasoning Norad provided when funding was not renewed on Indigenous projects was often related to results. In response to Nils's presentation, many speakers

pointed out that this focus on quantifiable results was at odds with the foundations of their work. Keskitalo pointed out that “To speak with one voice requires engagement over time . . .” and this theme was continuously taken up by others as well.

Not everyone kept their cool as seemingly effortlessly as Keskitalo. One representative from a European civil society organization passionately declared how she saw the state’s reliance on a discourse of results as an excuse: “We have invested a lot in the last years, we have invested a lot in being able to show the results,” and when we are successful, the projects are defunded nonetheless. When that happens, she went on, “The reason they give is the change in priorities in the funding scheme.” Or, when the results *can* be demonstrated, “[Nordic state agencies say] A lot has been achieved. . . Why should we invest, Norway or Denmark. . . Why don’t others take the lead? We have invested so much and so much has been achieved . . .” Clearly exasperated, she concluded, “Even the results achieved become an argument to withdraw!” For her, the whole idea of results linked to a particular project—the very foundation of the quantitative approach to effectiveness that Nils described—was the wrong way to view progress on Indigenous issues because “. . . the result is not the achievement of one organization but of many actors.”

Another more senior member from the same organization concurred: “Something that goes against what we do is this *project concept*. . . [Indigenous peoples] are trying to build something much more long-term, generational even.” An anthropologist working in the aid sector raised the same issue. Speaking directly to the Norad representative in the room, she pled, “You have to believe us when we say it takes time. . . Not a one or three

years project but twenty or thirty years.”²²² The idea that there was no longer any support for building these long-term trajectories in which organizations and actors could achieve more together than they could ever have done alone was clearly distressing to the Forum participants who wanted to continue pursuing “Indigenous questions” in development but found the cornerstones of their approach were no longer legible to state funders. They now found their own understandings marginalized even a venue that had once focused on their concerns.

Putting voice to this feeling, one of the more senior attendees at one point lamented: “Indigenous peoples, they are marginal people and the people in this room that deal with Indigenous peoples, we are marginal people!” He was not an Indigenous person himself, but rather a scholar who had dedicated much of his career to the study of Indigenous languages and advocacy for Indigenous peoples. Part of what made the loss of the Forum distressing and problematic was the loss of a dedicated space within which Indigenous scholars, leaders, and their allies across NGO, government, and academic sectors could be in dialog. This space had provided one way for people to make “Indigenous questions” a central part of their professional and personal identities over a timescale of decades of engagement. Without such an ongoing space, it might not be possible to influence the trajectories of peoples’ lives and careers in this way. And, as this senior scholar’s lament made clear, it also had the effect of devaluing the contributions and achievements of those who had already dedicated decades to the cause and had, up to this point, thought of their accomplishments as having been acknowledged.

²²² Anthropologists have written on the hegemony of results of human rights work measured in indicators, its effects, and its limitations. See, e.g., Merry (2011) and Merry et al. (2015).

The ability to undertake enduring collaboration with Indigenous peoples guided by relationship building—not just results—had long rested on the support of Indigenous peoples as a moral imperative *not* governed by the ups and downs of political popularity. But it was clear from the Norad representatives' presentations that they did not see that as a possibility in the current moment. Even Nils's colleague, who had much more extensive engagement with Indigenous issues, saw it as necessary that the Forum shift toward functioning as an interest group. He spoke about how Norad had fewer staff for their budget than they had in the past. There was no time to engage with civil society and researchers like there had been in earlier years. The fact that he was the only speaker at the whole meeting to appear via Skype seemed to underline this point.

Focus on Indigenous Peoples, Specifically, Is Crucial

Sidsel Saugestad, a UiT professor emeritus, had long participated in the Forum and provided an excellent example of what could result from having that engagement as a part of her trajectory alongside other influences in her scholarly career. In her presentation, she drew on expertise regarding state budgets to contest the statements Nils had made in his earlier presentation. Through reference to budgets and white papers that Norad itself produced, she showed that the state's earlier explicit focus on Indigenous issues had faded, so that they were now "lumped in with other 'minority,' 'vulnerable' concerns," not just in Nils's discourse but meaningfully within Norad itself. In official documents that express the state's intent, Saugestad found a conspicuous absence. She pointed out that where Norad's budget was concerned, the long-existing earmarked vote particular to Indigenous peoples had disappeared. To make her point about the damage resulting from this, she rattled off a list of the programs and organizations that had been

funded under that line. Circling back to the way Nils had positioned Indigenous people as just another minority in his presentation, Saugestad did not mince words in pointing out that their funding had been discontinued *prior* to the refugee crisis to which Nils had attributed the decrease; her own scholarship tracing back at least four years pointed to these problems in the making back then (Saugestad 2012b). After her presentation, Nils's assertion that any defunding of work on Indigenous issues had been "unintentional" could not stand as a sufficient explanation for the clear changes that had transpired, both at the level of foundational understandings of the purpose of state engagement with Indigenous issues and in the black and white of state budgets.

After Saugestad pointed to evidence of the move away from Indigenous issues in Norad's own paper trail, a representative from Norwegian Church Aid (*Kirkens Nødshjelp*) pointed out how damaging it was that Indigenous concerns were not treated as a special priority in Norad's evaluation practices either. She told us how Norwegian Church Aid had prioritized building employee competence in Indigenous issues, going so far as to develop separate training materials on Indigenous issues, which every employee would be required to master. But now the organization found that it had to turn away from the projects that would most benefit from this work. Because state funders do not ask for results particular to Indigenous peoples, she argued, many accomplishments in this area are ultimately unseen and eventually deprioritized. "If you're not asking for results in this area, how are we going to present our findings?" Without staff and grants earmarked for Indigenous peoples specifically, this won't be the highest priority, even for those organizations that are still receiving aid grants.

Clearly, Forum participants felt passionately that “Indigenous questions” formed an area with distinct challenges, which required a particular expertise, and could not just be “lumped in with other ‘minority,’ ‘vulnerable’ concerns,” as Saugestad had phrased it. The lack of a budget earmark and a clear request for results on Indigenous issues formed two ways that the work of Forum participants was no longer supported by state funders. Another way this became clear at the meeting was through the difference of the Forum participants’ stance, which centered Indigenous questions alongside an open attitude toward the question of development, and the stance of the representatives from Norad, who expressed a more strictly economic understanding of development, with its own set of underlying assumptions that were out of sync with the terms of the discussion at the Forum.

This conflict between a Forum focused primarily on development and a Forum focused on Indigenous peoples came to a head in an exchange between a Russian Forum attendee and Nils from Norad. Speaking through a UiT student translator, the Russian representative asked whether, as priorities are changing in Norway, they might come to better reflect the changing situation in Russia. For him, this was urgently important because Russian Indigenous people contend with state oppression. Because they are not supported within the state in which they live, he said, they need outside support, calling back to Keskitalo’s comments about the importance of international solidarity work.

Nils responded that Norad has no relationship with Russia and “it’s not a priority for our government [in the aid budget].” This statement was met with tense silence in the room. Nils’s reply reveals how the Russian’s questions do not fit with Norad’s understanding of development, even though—because they involve Indigenous peoples

facing challenges related to development—the Russian’s concerns clearly fell within the Forum’s mandate. For Norad in 2016, underdevelopment should be the problem, and bringing in “development” in the form of foreign direct investment, and perhaps a limited amount of publicly funded aid, is the solution to that problem. For Nils, the problems of Russian Indigenous peoples with state oppression—even when that oppression is in part carried out *through development*—had nothing to do with Norad. Seen from the perspective of the history of the establishment of Indigenous rights as human rights, a history in which many Forum members were well versed, this was a strange view of human rights indeed. Human rights came to be seen as a relevant way to frame Indigenous concerns in the post-WWII moment; human rights responded to the very real threat that states might not always protect the rights of their own citizens, especially those belonging to groups perceived as different from the national mainstream (Rodríguez-Piñero 2005).

When Nils paired his statement about how the situation of Russian Indigenous peoples is not a priority for Norad with that assertion that “Human rights is a big priority for the government; it’s supposed to be the major principle of the mainstreaming,” the comment garnered an audible sniff from the one of the development workers in the room. Tensions had risen throughout the meeting as it became apparent to all present exactly how fundamentally opposed the stance of the Norad representatives and the priorities of the Forum attendees really were. Further along in the same discussion, the same Russian attendee’s questions for Nils became interrogative, rather than open: “Why do you close the Forum?” he asked. “Is it a gap in your understanding for the work of Indigenous

peoples? How will you cover this gap?” Despite Nils’s ongoing presence in the room, this question went unanswered.

The End of the Forum, the Closure of an Important Space

In much the way that Merry (2006) has described UN human rights meetings as a particular kind of space, the Forum, itself modeled on some of the same principles, served as a space for reproducing core concepts and commitments among Indigenous leaders and their allies in academia, civil society, and government. It provided a venue for the continuous reproduction of key concepts in the way that semiotic anthropologists describe as necessary for continuity of particular local concepts across time (Parmentier 1994; Wortham 2006; Agha 2007). The Forum helped build the community that carried a particular, historically rooted approach to Indigenous questions into individuals’ work in the wider world. Where Tsing (2005) has described the reformulation of universals in local context, the Forum might be an example of a concept local to one historical experience gaining traction in a wider world of scholarship and development, where it would be applied to universalist projects.

The loss of the Forum, due to the end of its state funding, represents a loss not just of a single project but a loss of the space and the setting it provided for the ongoing reproduction and dissemination of concepts and associated ethical commitments that took decades to build. As I have described in the historical section of this chapter, this distinctive approach emerged from the Sami pursuit of recognition, an experience that, now that formal acknowledgment is in hand, will not happen again (and could never happen the same way twice, regardless). The Forum was important as a space that was

not only centered on Indigenous issues; it was framed in a particular way around particular aims.

The Forum's end raised big questions. First and foremost, the primary question raised overtly at the meeting was: In the absence of the Forum as a venue, how might Forum members continue to work toward common goals using their common approach? I see a second dimension to the problem; the Forum provided a place for work on Indigenous questions to be valued and validated. When one non-Indigenous Forum attendee lamented that “we . . . are marginal people,” he pointed to the role of the Forum and venues like it for shaping professional and life trajectories centered on a commitment to expertise and advocacy in Indigenous questions. Without the same kind of setting—the same genre of event (Silverstein 1993)—an opportunity to reproduce a particular kind of professional advocate for Indigenous issues is lost. Career and life trajectories that were enabled by this kind of institution in the past may not be possible without the state mandates that condition the existence of these kinds of settings.

The defunding of the Forum seems to represent a broader shift away from explicit concern with Indigenous questions and the mandates and requests for results in that area that would support that work. Without these, Indigenous questions fall back to being “marginal” according to the metrics that otherwise guide the work of the organizations represented at the Forum, from NGOs to government agencies. For longtime participants, the loss of the Forum represents a bigger shift that could take both institutional and individual life trajectories in new directions, representing a loss of continuity with historical approaches under a changed set of circumstances.

Indigenous Questions Swept Aside in Broader Historical Shift

The nature of these changed circumstances is made clear in analysis of the history of the decline in state support for the Forum. Anthropologist Sidsel Saugestad, a longtime faculty member at UiT and an influential voice at the Forum, has written on the impact of political shifts on the Forum. Her contribution to the 2012 Forum, published in that year's report, outlines how, in the mid 1990s, advocates of collaborative international work with Indigenous peoples had difficulty finding a clear addressee within the state and therefore had trouble generating momentum for their work (Saugestad 2012a, 4). She recounts that this situation was brought to light in the 1998 evaluation of the existing Indigenous Peoples in Development Aid (*Urfolk i Bistanden*) program of 1983; the founding of the Forum in 2000 (to be administered initially by Norad), was meant to provide a focal point for international work with Indigenous peoples. Saugestad (2012a) recounts how a steady stream of state documents on this topic in the late 1990s and early 2000s has since slowed and then stopped. Saugestad (2012a, 5) reports that beginning around 2010, whenever Forum members pointed to the most recent policy from 2004, they were told it was "no longer valid" due to being outdated and that it would be replaced soon. After years of such communications, Saugestad concluded that "we [at the Forum] no longer have a mandate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Norad." And not only that, the government's practice had shifted so dramatically that by 2012, "Norad no longer has a mandate to formulate mandates" (Saugestad 2012a, 5).

Saugestad points out that the changes are profound and go beyond the realm of Indigenous issues to affect the very operating practices of state institutions. In assessing that "Norad no longer has a mandate to issue mandates," she makes an astute observation

not only about the workings of Norad but about how the primary political and economic ideas that guided Norway in the 20th century have shifted moving into the 21st century. During the course of the past 50 years, the predominant ideas about the relationship between the state and the economy—especially regarding the role of the market—have changed enormously in Norway. Some of the underlying assumptions in Nils’s presentation reflected where this shift had arrived in 2016: the market is a central influence and the state wields only a small budget of public money, which should be used to influence the market. This is the approach that is “effective,” he said. It is the approach practiced by “all donor countries” in development aid. However popular it might be worldwide today, this was not always the predominant view on the relationship between the state and the market in Norway. Up until the 1970s, the country was an outlier among Western nations for its engagement with the idea of a centrally planned economy as a way to build back from the destruction of World War II.²²³ Norway only moved definitively away from this unique approach in the late 1970s.²²⁴ In Norway, a country

²²³ The Norwegian experiment in centrally planned economic rebuilding after the war became the subject of much attention, even at the global level. See, for instance, Americans were writing about these developments already in the 1940s and 1950s, as outlined by Bjerkholt (2000): Bourneuf 1958; Galenson 1949; Klein 1948; Leiserson 1959.

²²⁴ The commitment to centralized planning was strongest before it was challenged by the Marshall Plan mandate that participants join free trade organizations. And Norway made further adaptations to retain the character of its strong central planning when it joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960. Throughout this period, Norway did engage seriously with Keynesianism, which advocated for a market-driven economy with an active state as a way to achieve the benefits of state-direction, including avoiding cycles of unemployment, without sacrificing the power of individual initiative that might be lost in a state-directed economy (Keynes 1936). Keynes’ approach was taken up in the U.S. and the U.K. and, for a time, his “third way” between state control and unbridled *laissez faire* economy was the consensus stance in many countries. By the late 1970s, Norway began to move more definitively away from the regulations that had been seen as setting Norway apart from countries with liberal economies. Arguments for this shift focused on the “inefficiency” of the central planning aspects of the economy (Sæther and Eriksen 2014b, 68). This shift in Norway took place during the same set of years during which many countries shifted from Keynesianism toward neoliberalism (Palley 2004). Among them were two of the countries to which Norway had its closest ties, the United Kingdom and the United States. By 1979, Norway had completely dispensed with its centrally planned economy. The reason cited was its “inefficiency”—the beginning of the same sort of rhetoric that was still in evidence at the Forum in 2016.

with a strong historical commitment to social democracy and newly available wealth won from their management of petroleum resources (Takle 2021) and from the increased tax-base resulting from the introduction of women into the workforce (Huber and Stephens 2000), neoliberalism was slow to set in. A transition to an increasingly neoliberal economy was blunted once (1972) and then again (1994) when Norway twice elected to remain outside the European Union. Eventually, though, Norway too came under the sway of neoliberal ideas promoting the primacy of the market for solving all sorts of social and political, not to mention economic, problems. This transition, not only in the economy but in the scope granted to government to act directly on key social and economic questions has often been discussed by social scientists, including anthropologists, as neoliberalization. In Norway, where a high degree of central planning paired with attention to regional issues had been the hallmark of the “golden days” after World War II (E.O. Eriksen 1993, 132), this shift was, in comparison to other parts of the world, both late and highly noticeable.

Rather than a concern about what is morally right, a stance that predominated when the Sami cause caught national attention in Norway in the late 1970s, in more recent years, the state has shifted toward a language of what is “effective,” a stance evident in the Norad representatives’ contributions to the final Forum meeting. Saugestad highlights the foundational nature of this shift when she points out that it is not a change in Norad’s mandate that caused the closure of the Forum but an unwillingness at Norad to give clear explicit mandates of the sort that existed in earlier decades. In the place of such mandates, in the discourse from the Forum, we see a preoccupation with what is effective. This is the result of a constrained vision of the opportunities available. Indeed,

the Norad representatives stated quite bluntly that they already knew the best approach to development, the one shared by other major donor nations that would limit costs to the state by seeking to mobilize the private sector.

The fact that this approach was out of step with the concerns of the Forum did not seem to be received as a need for capacity building in Indigenous issues on the part of state actors; representatives from Norad deigned to acknowledge the question about how they would account for this “gap.” Instead, it was the Forum participants who, even in the context of the Forum, had begun to shift their attention away from state partners who would no longer provide clear support for their work and toward those who, at least as per the suggestion of the state, really mattered. The final session of the Forum was titled “Business and Industry” and featured a number of non-Norwegian contributors presenting on direct engagements between Indigenous peoples and the private sector in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. This transition raises the question of who it is important to be recognized *by*. As Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) have pointed out, it is increasingly important for ethnic groups, among whom they include several Indigenous peoples, to be recognizable in the context of global markets, where they can operate in a corporate capacity and take advantage of the symbolic resources of their ethnic distinctiveness as a form of value-added for a variety of products and enterprises. In this new context, state acknowledgment matters to the extent that it facilitates acknowledgment in the private sector. Can the commitments that guided the engagement with the state and with the UN system remain intact in these new dialogs? Time will tell.

Conclusion

Much like the transformation of the meaning of recognition in the US context from 1960 to 1990, described in Chapters 4 and 5, in Norway, some of the longstanding entailments of recognition are still open to change, despite the surety of Norwegian Samis' recognized status. The concepts that were elaborated as a part of the work toward recognition and toward implementing its ideas—like the orientation to “Indigenous questions” elaborated in Tromsø as a part of the building of Sami institutions—remain important to many of the actors who have engaged with these spaces. Yet transformations in the broader societal context make their commitments illegible outside of the spaces that they have controlled, where those ideas have been upheld over the course of decades. Even though Sami people are still acknowledged as Indigenous people in Norway, some of the means by which that status was meant to translate into meaningful forms of self-determination are less durable. Yes, Sami people who fulfill the criteria of the Sami Act can vote for representation in the Sami Parliament; this right is ensured through national legislation. However, the ability of the Sami Parliament to participate meaningfully in international affairs, as regards Norway's relationships with Indigenous peoples in developing countries, has proven less assured. The arrangements that enabled this kind of work at the Forum were constructed in part through state mandates, which are no longer issued, and state actors have begun to treat those engaged in this sort of space as merely another interest group, without specific recognition of the ongoing importance of their work to the state and the society.

The fate of the Forum shows how many of the institutional arrangements that accompanied official state recognition, and even high-profile international engagements,

can remain open to subtle erosion over time; not through direct opposition to Indigenous rights or the importance of Indigenous issues but rather through changes to the context in which Indigenous issues are made legible and actionable. These spaces have been important settings for the elaboration and reproduction of particular approaches to action on Indigenous rights that emerged from the Sami recognition struggle. They were spaces where these commitments could be centered and where they could be concretized or reanalyzed to make them relevant for facing a variety of new problems. Institutional spaces, with their regular meetings, their overt discourse about the norms and practices enshrined in that space, and their community and camaraderie, play an important role in sustaining durable orientations like the approach to Indigenous questions described in this chapter. Where those spaces are closed, recognition, following the change to its entailments, begins to mean something different from what it did before.

Even for those groups, like the Sami in Norway, who are firmly recognized by the state, the experience of this recognized status is not static. Spaces for dialog and influence that are gained at one point in history can be lost. Even long after it is attained, the position of clear importance that accompanied and grew out of the recognition struggle can be subtly deprioritized and eventually lost. A group once held up as a people with a special status and a set of unique rights—and even assured these rights in a UN Declaration—can be reconceptualized as an interest group, like any other. Recognition, even when “successful,” does not usher in a permanent state of positive acknowledgment. Recognized status must be lived in, through historical time and historical change. Experiences of recognition—and the meanings of recognition for those who have these

experiences of it—remain open to historical contingency even as the fact of a recognized status may be enshrined in national law or even in a country's constitution.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has centered on three related research questions about Indigenous people's experiences of social recognizability and political acknowledgment. First, I asked how the meanings and entailments of political recognition have changed for Sami people in Norway and Nipmuc people in the United States, even as the political forms of recognition to which these groups are subject have remained largely static over the course of decades. Answering this question required looking at the history of recognition over a timescale of decades, tracing back to initial Indigenous demands for recognition in the 1960s and 1970s and through the establishment of state measures claiming to confer recognition in the 1970s and 1980s. Beyond tracing these histories, I considered how Sami and Nipmuc people have experienced the pursuit of recognition, its denial or bestowal, and the recognized or non-recognized status that followed from those events. Along the way, I pointed to the ways that Sami and Nipmucs challenge or resist forms of state and societal recognition, the terms of which they cannot fully control.

In the body of the dissertation, I focused on one of the two research contexts in each of the chapters, moving through chapters related to the experience of Nipmuc people in the United States first and then to the Sami case in Norway. In this concluding chapter, I take the opposite approach and discuss the commonalities among and differences between these two cases as established over the course of the dissertation. I do so with an eye to how examining two quite different cases of Indigenous recognition alongside one another can reveal some unexpected similarities as well as notable differences and

opportunities for future research that complements the findings established in this dissertation.

Outline of the Chapter

I open this concluding chapter with comparisons across the two distinct contexts for Indigenous recognition that I bring together in this dissertation. I begin with the unexpected commonalities between the two cases; I consider how these may constitute generalizable observations about the political forms of recognition that arose beginning in the 1970s. I begin with a summary of the findings of each of three chapters, Chapters 3, 4, and 7, and then put the two cases into comparative perspective, highlighting three main insights that unite both cases. Both cases feature a clearly important role of for national and international scales in these two recognition struggles. In each of the two cases the state takes a central role in continuing to redefine the entailments of recognition over time. Each of the two histories shows clear continuities in the concepts, practices, and commitments embraced by Sami and Nipmuc people, even as they engage with the state on the topic of recognition. In particular, these similarities across cases highlight the limitations of recognition measures for empowering Indigenous communities in the way their proponents have long claimed they do.

After establishing some of the major similarities across the Nipmuc and Sami contexts, I turn to the differences between the two cases, focusing on a second set of chapters, Chapters 5 and 6. In this comparative analysis, I focus on the relationship between the commonsense criteria used to “read” Indigenous identities in everyday life and the legal criteria inscribed in laws and regulations. I argue that the differences

between the kinds of criteria featured in these models and how they are evaluated are linked to more general realities about the national society's relationship to Indigeneity. In this way, studying the political organization of signification—here, the structure of perception and construal of Indigenous identities—can illuminate differences in the modes of marginalization to which Indigenous people are subject within Europe as compared to the North American context. After reviewing these findings, I consider the limitations of the dissertation and review a series of possible directions for future, related work.

Summary of Findings; Comparisons across Contexts

Continuities across Chapters 3–4 and Chapter 7

In Chapter 3, I established that the predominant meanings of recognition among my Nipmuc interlocutors today related both to identity and sovereignty, understood in terms of the land rights, nation status, and other elements entailed by federally recognized status. I demonstrated how these remarkably consistent contemporary conceptions are continuous with the way recognition is discussed by those immersed in national scale discourse about federal acknowledgment today. However, this two-part conception of recognition was not the only one described by my Nipmuc interlocutors in 2018; three interviewees remembered an earlier orientation to recognition as a route to accessing federal programs and services. Through a historical investigation of early Nipmuc involvement in the national recognition movement, I established that this earlier conception of recognition was congruent with national-scale discourse, just like the later two-part conception (identity and sovereignty). Ultimately, in Chapter 3, I established

two things. First, each of the understandings of “recognition” among Nipmuc interviewees is linked to a concept that had a national-scale social domain at one point in time. Second, and related, the predominant meaning of recognition for Native Americans engaged in the national recognition movement had been transformed over the course of six decades of political engagement as part of the national recognition movement.

In Chapter 4, I used historical evidence to pursue the how and why of this transformation of the meaning of recognition. In Chapter 3, Nipmuc’s understandings of recognition followed closely with the national discourse. Therefore, in Chapter 4 I drew on sources originating in explicitly national contexts to examine when, how, and why the predominant meaning of recognition changed among the non-federally recognized tribes engaged in the national recognition movement. I began the chapter with a close reading of sections of the report of the American Indian Policy Review Commission’s (AIPRC) Task Force Ten on terminated and non-federally recognized tribes. I established that the idea that recognition was important because it governed access to federal programs and services was still the primary way leaders among non-federally recognized tribes in New England talked about recognition in the mid-1970s, a notable continuity from the earliest evidence of this idea at the national scale at the American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC) in 1961. Task Force Ten did not call for the establishment of a new process for recognizing non-federally recognized tribes. Instead, the report recommended doing away with the concept of recognition entirely.

The notion of a new process with clear evaluative criteria appeared in the final report of the AIPRC a year later. In this report, the Commission agreed with Task Force Ten that non-recognition was a problem, citing lack of access to federal services among

the reasons why the status quo could not stand. Nonetheless, the Commission's recommendations in 1977 departed dramatically from those of Task Force Ten in 1976. The AIPRC recommended recognition be extended to non-federally recognized tribes through a new federal office administering a research-based petitioning process governed by explicit criteria for the federal acknowledgment of Indian tribes. The AIPRC report showed a strong commitment to the idea of recognition as a legal concept governing the relationship between tribes and the federal government, the nation-to-nation or "domestic dependent nation" relationship described elsewhere in federal doctrine emerging from the courts (D'Errico 2000). The two reports show a clear contrast between how recognition was understood at that time within the federal government as compared to among Native leaders in New England. Some of the key ideas in the AIPRC report were soon after integrated into the 1978 regulation that created the administrative federal acknowledgment process, even as the regulation was notably different in its particulars when compared to the AIPRC recommendations.

As other scholars have pointed out (Campisi and Starna 1999; Miller 2004; Klopotek 2011), non-federally recognized tribes did quickly begin to engage with the newly established petitioning process through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) after 1978, but my research demonstrates that this fact needs to be understood in the broader context of the decades that followed. Non-federally recognized tribes' understandings of recognition and why it might or might not be worthwhile did not change suddenly in the single moment of the introduction of the federal regulation. Rather, as I argued in the remainder of Chapter 4, although the regulation and the AIPRC report that informed it *set the stage* for a possible transformation in the meaning of recognition to non-federally

recognized tribes, this transformation was only achieved over a timescale of decades, through a series of historically contingent developments. These changes were rooted in a much broader transformation in political and economic ideologies guiding US policy moving into the 1980s. With evidence from my 2018 interviews, I demonstrated that well into the 1980s, at least some Nipmucs who engaged with federal programs related to acknowledgment did so strategically, staying true to their own longstanding goal of being able to administer their own programs.

Together, these two chapters support several observations about the Nipmuc experience of seeking government recognition at the federal level. First, they demonstrate the important role of regional- and national-scale engagements in the origins of Nipmuc advocacy around recognition. From the perspective of the 1978 acknowledgment regulation, pursuing recognition would seem to be something that individual tribes do. The process, as outlined, focuses explicitly on the scale of individual tribes and their members. However, in looking at Native Americans' discourse around recognition, which long precedes the introduction of the federal regulation, it is clear that the widespread early understandings of recognition as a political issue emerged through national-scale discourse among representatives from tribes across the continent and through engagement among individuals from different tribes at the regional level who articulated and pursued common goals.

Leaders among many New England tribes initially understood recognition primarily, though not necessarily solely, as a problem of access to programs and services. By the 1970s, this exclusion, and Native leaders' keen awareness of it, contributed to the feeling that tribes in New England had been overlooked by the federal government. Some

leaders began to understand this lack of clear acknowledgment of their status as Indigenous people as a denial of their identity as “Indians” on the same level with recognized tribes. These insights and motivations did not emerge at the level of a single tribe but rather in a bigger picture of national developments in Native American political organizing and advocacy. The pursuit of recognition did not begin within government-instigated settings but was eventually drawn into those spaces, as with the participatory and outreach processes of Task Force Ten in 1975–1976.

In addition to establishing the importance of larger scales beyond a single tribe for arriving at an understanding of recognition, Chapters 3 and 4 also demonstrated how government actors reserved for themselves the power to determine the contours of state action on non-recognition. By the 1970s, Congress sought to increase the legitimacy of its policy-making through participatory processes, like the AIPRC’s task forces. However, despite this participatory structure, it is also clear that the Commission itself, composed substantially of members of Congress, retained the ability to define the terms of the policies that would be proposed in the final report. While Task Force Ten was dedicated to terminated and non-federally recognized tribes, the main Commission of the AIPRC featured representation from already-recognized tribes and members of Congress, tasked with representing their own constituents. The AIPRC report naturalized the idea of recognition as related to sovereignty by emphasizing the legal definition of the term, even as it acknowledges some of the discourse about the problem among the non-federally recognized tribes who participated in Task Force Ten, including the lack of access to services. Yet the Commission ignored the way non-federally recognized tribes contested the idea that recognition was a critical legal concept at the root of the emerging federal

contracting model taking root among federally-recognized tribes and at the BIA at the time (Castile 1998). The growing federal focus on recognition as a principle structuring the relationship between tribes and the federal government had little to do with the vision articulated by non-federally recognized tribes in the 1970s, which referenced policies and possibilities linked to postwar liberal optimism and universalist welfare programs.

In the 1980s, universalist programs were defunded and dismantled, an outcome only those in control of government institutions could accomplish. Non-federally recognized tribes had to adapt to the reduced opportunities available. Though they began to engage with federal programs related to acknowledgment, according to my interlocutor's account they initially did so to pursue their own longstanding goals, not because they embraced the federal government's emphasis on recognition as a key legal concept. Acceptance of a new understanding of recognition, one related to identity and sovereignty, seems to have emerged from the new field of discourse and experience that emerged around the administrative federal acknowledgment process in the later 1980s and into the 1990s. During that time, acknowledgment was granted to several New England tribes with the stakes and nature of the recognition question changed in the wake of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). The idea that recognition was about identity and sovereignty only took root gradually and, as evidenced in my 2018 interviews, at least some tribal members maintained a clear memory of the earlier motivations related to programs and services. In fact, even those interviewees who expressed quite different opinions about the recognition history of the 1990s held a common view of the earlier pursuit of programs and services as a worthwhile goal.

On one level, the historical arguments in Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate the uniqueness of the contingent evolution of the political recognition of Indigenous groups in the United States. However, several general observations from these chapters are echoed in the Sami history in Norway as well. Reading across Chapters 3, 4, and 7 in this dissertation reveals notable similarities in these two groups' experiences of political recognition. In all three of these chapters, I examined how the entailments of recognition can shift over a timescale of decades as the broader context for how state actors understand recognition changes. Unlike Chapters 3 and 4, however, in Chapter 7 I examined how these changes are received and challenged in the ethnographic present.

Chapter 7 takes us to Tromsø, Norway for the 2016 meeting of the Forum for Development Cooperation with Indigenous Peoples (*Forum for Urfolk i Bistand*), where attendees grappled with the end of the Forum as a result of the withdrawal of state support for the group and its mission. I showed how the understanding of development at the meeting and the way Forum members conducted themselves were contiguous with a longer orientation to Indigenous issues that developed during the course of the Sami pursuit of recognition from the 1960s onward. In particular, the framing of Indigenous issues in terms of "Indigenous questions" (*urfolksspørsmål*) has a long history at the university in Tromsø where the Forum was founded. I demonstrated that the Forum was a space organized around ideas that emerged from the Sami recognition struggle, even as it drew from multiple scales of interaction and experience. International concepts and experiences clearly feed into the approach to Indigenous issues that underlies the Forum.

I showed that the Forum constituted one space in which the orientation to "Indigenous questions" elaborated in Sami politics and scholarship was a central

principle guiding the work of a community of experts and Indigenous leaders. Forum members themselves point out that it is one place where their work on Indigenous issues is not “marginal” but instead central. I argue that their distress at the loss of the Forum represents a twofold reaction. On one level, this reaction laments the loss of a space where durable orientations to Indigenous issues are central guiding principles and practices. Without spaces in which they can be practiced and discussed, such orientations—themselves outgrowths of the recognition struggle—cannot be transmitted and circulated in ways that ensure their continued relevance.

On a second level, though, Forum members read the loss of state support for the Forum as a withdrawal of the state’s established recognition of the exceptional position of the Sami as Indigenous people of Norway. When representatives of the state at the meeting suggested the Forum members shift to operating as an interest group lobbying politicians in Oslo, like any other civil society interest. This discursive shift raises the specter that Indigenous issues, and Indigenous people, are no longer recognized as an overt priority of the Norwegian state in the way earlier discourse about recognition suggested they should not only be but should remain.

National and International Scales Play Critical Roles

The content of Chapters 3, 4, and 7 reveal three commonalities in Indigenous peoples’ experiences of political recognition, even across two cases that are very different from one another. First, in these chapters, we see the importance of larger-scale spaces of connection for elaborating and reproducing Indigenous peoples’ ideas about how best to pursue better futures for their own communities, or, as in the case of the AICC and the Forum meeting, for Indigenous people generally. The literature on the history of

Indigenous internationalism details many of these globe-spanning connections as key elements of the rise of Indigenous activism and Indigenous rights, but these accounts often focus on person-to-person connections (Niezen 2000, 2003; Crossen 2014, 2016, 2017). What we see across Chapters 3, 4, and 7 is that the spaces in which people come together to discuss issues of concern are important for the reproduction or transmission of the ideas that form the core of their advocacy. Even as policies may focus on single tribes (as they do in the US) or evaluate the attributes of individuals (as they do in Norway), much broader connections are important for understanding how Indigenous peoples engage with recognition both before and after state measures are implemented.

These larger-scale engagements, which are not addressed in recognition policies, have been important, enduring parts of the pursuit of recognition and the way people experience the forms of political recognition extended to them or denied to them. Through these engagements, people from different Indigenous communities become part of what Agha (2007, 67) would call a speech chain network—a group of people who understand the same meaning from the same sign, even if they are not directly acquainted with one another. Such networks are where much of the elaboration, circulation, and transformation of concepts occurs. These speech chain networks are where ideas about recognition or its entailments (capacity building, development, and so on as discussed in Chapter 7) are circulated and propagated both among Indigenous people and, in both these cases, scholars and experts as well. In Chapters 3, 4, and perhaps especially in Chapter 7, we can see the importance of these spaces for constituting ideas about why recognition is important and what kinds of resources, relationships, and status Indigenous people and their advocates understand recognition to entail.

The State Continues to Define (and Redefine) the Entailments of Recognition

Chapters 3, 4, and 7 also show how the opportunities available to Indigenous peoples engaged in these networks are shaped by the way state actors continued to have influence over the entailments of recognition long after concrete recognition policies are introduced. Recognition policies initially seem to clearly attach particular rights to groups or individuals as defined by the criteria in their legal models; however, in these chapters we see that these entailments are not as fixed as they initially seem. Those empowered in particular ways by their roles in state institutions continue to play an important part in shaping what kinds of resources, relationships, and rights are really available to Indigenous people through their relationship with the state. While many entailments are clearly outlined in laws and regulatory texts, others are not, and even concrete policies remain open to interpretation.

In the Norwegian case, Sami recognition is enshrined not only in law but also in the country's constitution and an oft-cited speech from the King. Nonetheless, as we saw in Chapter 7, these forms of official recognition do *not* translate to sure support for some of the projects and priorities taken up since those acts of recognition. The closure of the Forum, despite the state's role in instigating its creation and unwillingness to admit overtly that it has been deprioritized, demonstrates that many of the meaningful entailments of recognition are open to erosion and diminishment. Spaces for communication and capacity building, like the Forum, would seem to have sure support because of the state's stance on the importance of recognition of the Sami, but this does not prevent state actors from refiguring this community of expertise and capacity building as an "interest group," like any other interest in Norwegian society. Rather than a

deliberate campaign of rollbacks on Indigenous issues specifically, the state's withdrawal of support is couched in a language of "effective" use of state funds and the need to follow international norms. The discourse of state actors at the meeting reveals how their core concerns have departed from the common understandings held by Forum members about the importance of their work. Such broader changes are difficult to contest.

As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, these kinds of changes to the broader context for holding the state accountable to Indigenous demands were evident in earlier decades in the United States. Where non-federally recognized tribes in the 1960s through mid-1970s understood recognition as important for how it mediated access to federal programs and services, the federal government in the late 1970s and 1980s promoted the recognition of non-federally recognized tribes while simultaneously diminishing many of the programs and services to which these groups wished to gain access. Cuts to programs that offered the opportunity for non-federally recognized tribes to administer their own programming *without* federally recognized status channeled non-federally recognized tribes toward seeking recognition.

In this case, the ability of the government to channel an ever-greater proportion of state support for Indigenous Americans through federally recognized status limited the opportunity for non-federally recognized groups to pursue their stated goals from the mid-1970s without first obtaining federal acknowledgment or at least engaging with federal acknowledgment programs and grants. As in the contemporary Sami case featured in Chapter 7, these shifts in the US in the 1980s were rooted in much larger political trends, in this case a shift from a climate of postwar liberal optimism toward neoliberal ideologies promoting marketization and limiting the role of government in service

provision. Indigenous people did not control these changes in the mainstream of national politics. In engaging with the state around recognition, they used existing opportunities, trying to find ways to move toward their own goals in the midst of changing possibilities.

In both cases, changes in worldview among state actors and much of the majority society made certain aspirations of Indigenous peoples and their advocates illegible in light of political priorities of the moment. Indigenous scholars writing on recognition have pointed out how engaging with the state can itself present problems for Indigenous peoples because of the way other priorities dominate these dialogs. Coulthard (2014, 47, 179) writes about how being drawn into a dialog with the state, inherently an *unequal* dialog, can redirect the Indigenous people who get involved in politics of recognition, drawing them away from their own communities' conceptions and priorities. In his introduction to Coulthard's book, Alfred (2014, ix–x) writes of the same conundrum embracing a dialogical understanding of the self to assert that engaging with the state can reshape the Indigenous person who is engaging in those interactions. Day and Sadik (2002) and Simpson (2014), too, caution that forms of recognition that flow from settler states are inherently forms of misrecognition. Simpson (2014, 16–22) emphasizes the importance of Mohawk strategies of refusal as a way of meeting these conditions head-on and staying dedicated to a Mohawk self and a Mohawk polity. Coulthard (2014, 13, 46–47, 51–53), by contrast, finds a place for careful engagement when complimented by staying “grounded” in Indigenous communities and territories.

These perspectives on recognition come from studies focused on Indigenous peoples who have longstanding forms of political acknowledgment affirmed in treaties. Their engagements with the state and with multicultural forms of recognition have firm

footing in those earlier forms of acknowledgment. The two cases I examined in this dissertation demonstrate the difficulties faced by groups the state had not already recognized as Indigenous before the 1980s. For those who must struggle to be recognized as Indigenous, as Nipmuc and Sami people have had to do, it would be understandable if their response to state measures promising recognition may be different from the perspectives of those who come from nations long-recognized, at least as distinct and as Indigenous, if not as fully sovereign and self-determining polities on their own terms.

The experiences of Sami people in Norway and Nipmuc people in the United States demonstrate the ways that engagement with the state can affect Indigenous leaders' priorities. The shift in the meaning of recognition traced across Chapters 3 and 4 is one example. A Nipmuc leader's conclusion that "we should have just been ourselves" instead of trying to fit the criteria of the federal acknowledgment regulation, included in Chapter 5, forms a second. And certainly, some Sami scholars see hallmarks of the same dynamics in the Norwegian context (e.g., Kuokkanen 2011). Nonetheless, each of these stories also shows meaningful ways in which Indigenous people maintain their own priorities, practices, and prerogatives, even as they seek forms of political recognition. With the Nipmuc case, even as Nipmuc people who were involved in the recognition work admit damage was done, we also see resilience in their will to continue as a community beyond the "final" denial of recognition meted out through an administrative process. The same is evident in the will of younger participants at the Forum meeting to ask not only what the state wants and how the Forum could present itself better to receive funding but also, or instead, "what do we want?"

Continuity in Concepts, Practices, and Commitments

Sami and Nipmuc leaders have engaged with the state around recognition in each of their unique contexts in Norway and the US over the course of six decades. Yet, Chapters 3, 4, and 7 show how these groups stayed true to their own concepts and commitments, even over the course of long-term interactions with state actors who understood recognition quite differently from these Indigenous groups. My Nipmuc interlocutors recalled the changing motives for pursuing recognition—indeed changes in how recognition was understood—over generations. The Forum meeting, similarly, demonstrates continuities in the durable orientation to “Indigenous questions” in Tromsø. Both of the two cases I bring together in this dissertation demonstrate careful engagement with the political possibilities of a given historical moment. Each of these two quite different cases shows how much continuity Indigenous people manage to maintain even in the face of the changing entailments of recognition and the changing winds of mainstream politics.

Contrasts Evident Through Chapters 5 and 6

Where looking across Chapters 3, 4, and 7 reveals some of the commonalities of Sami experiences of recognition in Norway and Nipmuc experiences in the United States, the remaining pair of chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, reveal some of the major differences between these two cases. Chapters 5 and 6 both focused on Indigenous experiences of recognition, though they pursue that topic in different ways. The content of Chapter 5 consists of interviewees’ reflections on their experiences with the Nipmuc recognition history, primarily efforts undertaken by Nipmuc Nation in the 1990s and 2000s. Such

reflection and reanalysis are important to include in order to access people's understandings of their own experiences of recognition. In Chapter 6, instead of focusing on reflections of experiences of political recognition, I focused primarily on the way the recognizability of Sami-ness as an ethnonational identity is organized in Norway, drawing on my ethnographic fieldnotes from national day celebrations wherein Norwegian and Sami ethno-nationalities are made overtly perceivable in ritual-like events.

Even though they approach experiences of recognition quite differently, Chapters 6 and 7, as a pair, highlight contrasts in Sami and Nipmuc experiences of social recognizability and official recognition in Norway and the United States. Two main elements contribute to this contrast are: (1) the content of the legal models themselves and how they are applied and (2) the legal models' relationship to sociohistoric models of identity. Ultimately, the differences between these two cases help illuminate broader differences about Indigeneity and modes of marginalization within Europe as compared to the context of "blue water" settler colonialism in North America (Minde 1995, 9; Saugestad 2008, 159).

Differences in Legal Models of Indigeneity

Differences in the nature of the legal models instituted in these two contexts is a first element of the contrast between the two cases. For the Sami in Norway, the stipulations as to who can register for the Sami Parliament are criteria that apply to individuals and are quite limited in scope. Subjective self-identification as Sami by descent, home language, and, to a lesser degree, generational political participation form the core of the voter registration criteria for the Sami Parliament. In the US, by contrast,

the criteria are substantially more extensive, they demand a greater degree of evidence, and they are more open to interpretation. This sets up contrasts in the experience of the recognition process that are so substantial they make a one-to-one comparison between the bureaucratic processes for recognition in these two cases difficult. In the Norwegian case, enrollment as a voter in the Sami Parliament is an individual decision, though it has also been the subject of public discourse (Norvang-Herstrøm 2018; NKR TV 2021). In the US, on the other hand, the process of petitioning for recognition was an important element of the Nipmuc peoples' experiences of recognition, as detailed in Chapter 5.

The Nipmuc experience with the administrative federal acknowledgment process, as discussed in Chapter 5, was characterized by substantial differences in how Nipmuc people thought about criteria like community, political authority, and membership as compared to how the Bureau of Acknowledgment Research (BAR)/Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) conceptualized the criteria. The way in which the BAR/OFA developed their own notions of precedent to hold later-petitioning tribes to the standards established by earlier-petitioning groups also presented a problem. Evaluating the diversity of Indigenous groups across the country by the same set of criteria also proved to be a challenge. Some interviewees suggested the process was “doomed from the start” because of the way expectations rooted in the realities of Western tribes' histories would be applied to Eastern groups like Nipmuc Nation.

This sense of a lack of fit with the criteria was eventually, in the Nipmuc Nation case, redoubled through the negative final determination and unsuccessful appeals that were a part of the tribe's recognition experience. Nipmuc interlocutors described this as an experience of finding themselves at the bottom of multiple “hierarchies” of

authenticity, one based on federally acknowledged status and the other based on racial standards around how Native Americans are expected to look, “phenotypically” (R. Gould 2018, interview with the author).

In the US, the legal model of Indigeneity avoids including the explicitly racial standards that are commonly central to widespread social models of Indigeneity and that were prominently employed in earlier, less formal determinations about which tribes should be assigned federally acknowledged status (Lowery 2013). Racial standards for what a Native American person should look like circulate not just among the national public in the US but also, as interviewees pointed out, among Native Americans on the national scale. Nipmuc people do not match these imagined contours of Indigeneity. Federal recognition was sought in part to gain a form of recognition of identity (see Chapter 3) in light of precisely this kind of illegibility of Nipmuc people in terms of widespread racial rubrics. The tribe’s inability to secure federal acknowledgment results in a form of doubled marginalization, based both on racial ontologies and the citation of federally recognized status as a measure of a tribe’s legitimacy.

In the case of the Sami in Norway, the criteria of the Sami Act reflect widespread consensus about some of the key elements of models of Sami identity circulating both within the Sami population in Norway and elsewhere (see Valkonen 2014 on the Finnish context) and among the national public. While the features highlighted in the Sami Parliament voter registration criteria are particular—the ongoing use of an Indigenous language, for example, does not feature prominently in the US regulation—within their own context they are widely accepted as commonsensical. In Chapter 6, I examined the metasemiotic schemes that help organize how Sami difference aligns with already-

established ideas about group identities in Norwegian society. Sami people in Norway are able to enact and communicate their own identities in terms of ideas about ethnic distinctiveness and nationhood that are widespread and highly naturalized in Norway. Quite opposite the Nipmuc experience that “we just didn’t fit in the box” (Holley 2018, interview with the author), in the Sami case, available models of ethnic difference do offer a meaningful match for how Sami people understanding their identities.

In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how celebrations of Sami National Day in Norway are able to tick all the boxes for the kinds of characteristics, associations, and practices that are anticipated by ethnonational ideologies in Norway. In celebrating Sami language, dress, food, songs, flags, handicrafts, and so on, Sami-ness becomes legible as a parallel ethnic category formulated on the same model as Norwegian ethnic imaginaries, and just as plausibly linked to peoplehood, nationhood, and inherent political rights. As detailed in Chapter 6, this national day creates an occasion in which Sami ethnonationality can be made overtly perceivable and implicitly equivalent to the kind of Norwegian ethnonationality enacted and celebrated on Norway’s national day. In part because the articulations of Sami-ness on Sami National Day follow a widely understood model, they make Sami people socially recognizable as such according to a set of indexical signs that come to be taken as iconic, as inherently related to Sami identity through a relationship of resemblance (Irvine and Gal 2000).

In making themselves so clearly legible as a group both distinct from and parallel to other (ethno)nations, celebrations of Sami National Day shore up the grounds for Sami political recognition, even as the institution of Sami National Day as an official flag day in Norway is an outcome of the state’s recognition of the Sami as the country’s

Indigenous people. Instead of double marginalization as in the Nipmuc context, in the Sami case in Norway we see a kind of positive feedback loop between political recognition and social recognizability. Sami distinctiveness and its association with political rights is established implicitly, as a part of a widespread common sense (Crehan 2016). And yet, though Sami and Norwegian collectivities are constructed as parallel and complementary nations, it is an equivalence without real equality. As discussed in the conclusion to Chapter 6, the ways that the Norwegian public and Norwegian public figures engage with Sami National Day also reveal the hierarchy between the national mainstream and the Sami.

The Importance of Social Recognizability to Political Recognition

Taken as a pair, Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate the importance of social recognizability to political recognition. They establish that such recognizability is more easily established in some contexts than in others. In some cases, there are well-established cultural models available for articulating Indigenous nationhood in a way that can reinforce rather than challenge the foundations of national imaginaries. The Norwegian context affords this kind of opportunity to Sami people, who have long built their own form of nationalism in dialog with the particular features of Norwegian nationalism (Lien 2018; Zachariassen 2012). There is an opportunity to make the existence of Sami people and Sami collective rights fit with widely naturalized understandings of nationhood and identity.

This is less easily achieved in the context of the US empire-state. In the United States, racial hierarchies and divisions have long structured societal dynamics of inclusion and exclusion (Bonilla-Silva 2011; Jung et al. 2011, 2015; Omi and Winant

2015). Even current narratives of unity that try to bridge these racial divides do so by excluding Indigenous people, sweeping aside the history of their violent displacement and oppression to construct a positive image of US society (Simpson 2014, 1). Nipmuc people are read through sets of assumptions—ontologies—that link particular identities with features of embodiment through racial rubrics for reading identity (and value and position in a societal hierarchy) from features of embodiment. Nipmuc histories and realities do not align with these ideologies; Nipmucs and other Native people in New England, as elsewhere, assert political and kin-based tribal identities that cannot be captured by—and often conflict with—race-based determinations.

The Sami Act's criteria draw on widespread, naturalized ideas about a link between language and identity, which derive their legitimacy from the predominant language ideology and its links to concepts of ethnicity and nation. The US federal acknowledgment criteria, by contrast, represent an attempt to sidestep the most essentialized and naturalized elements of public understandings of Indigenous identity—the racial rubrics widely utilized in everyday life—through an appeal to scholarly standards as an alternative basis for legitimacy, a different form of authority to cite (Goodman et al. 2013). One difference, then, between the legal models of Indigeneity implemented in the Norwegian Sami Act and the US federal acknowledgment regulation is their relationship to the social models of identity that circulate widely in these two societies. In the Norwegian case, the legal model aligns with and draws its legitimacy from widely held ontologies. In the US, the establishment of a legal model forms an attempt to circumvent widely held assumptions through recourse to the authority of expert knowledge. On one level, this difference helps to explain the lack of a demand for

substantive evidence in the case of the Norwegian rules for Sami voter enrollment as compared to the extensive demands for documentation and proof that characterize the US administrative federal acknowledgment process. If the state's evaluations about Indigenous identity are to be rooted in terms *other* than racial rubrics, then proof will be demanded, especially where expert determinations conflict with everyday racial readings of tribal members' identities by the wider public.

Indigeneity, Ontology, and the National Frame

On another level, however, the widely naturalized understandings of Indigeneity underlying the US process and the Norwegian Sami Act differ significantly from one another. The idea that Sami people were an Indigenous people was a novel framing for many of the Norwegian public and political establishment when Sami activists made this claim in the latter decades of the 20th century. However, the idea that Sami people constituted an ethnically distinct component of the country's population was a long-held idea. Notably, the recognition of Sami difference was expressed in terms of language. The Norwegianization policies of the 19th and 20th centuries targeted "Sami-speaking Norwegians" (*samisk talende nordmenn*) for integration into the nation, highlighting language as the key element of the group's divergence from the national mainstream. The way the Sami Act provides criteria for the identification of individual Sami subjects, rather than "tribes" or other groups, also follows closely widespread consensus about the role of the state in Scandinavian societies as an entity that protects the freedom of the individual from the family and the local community (Berggren and Trägård 2010). Elements of both societal recognizability and state recognition policies in Norway align

nicely with hegemonic understandings of the kinds of entities, people, and social categories that are the basis for a common understanding of social reality in Norway.

Nipmuc people, on the other hand, faced a context in which their identities were, by the 19th century, not easily legible to non-Native people in their region or in the country at large. Instead, as I noted in the opening chapter of this dissertation, by the 19th century most Nipmuc people were widely considered indistinguishable from “the colored races” allocated a lower station in society by whites who presumed that higher-class positions belonged to people within their own unmarked racial category (Lyman [1859], to Earle, cited in Plane and Button 1993, 595). Nipmucs and other Native people in New England were confronted with highly naturalized myths of the “dying out” of Indian people and were repeatedly redefined as only *descendants* of “Indians” rather than authentic Indigenous subjects (O’Brien 2010). Authentic Indigenous people were understood to exist only in the past, a belief that was bolstered by widespread ascription to “one-drop” logics of racial identity that designated all people with *any* African ancestry as Black (Wolfe 2006). Because, among Indigenous people, Native identity was not a matter of such racial categories—or certainly not *only* a matter of such categories—the very grounds for understanding who a person is and where they fit into society differed between the mainstream and Indigenous perspectives in the northeast.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I accounted for how these deeply rooted differences manifest in differences for the possibility of Sami and Nipmuc people to be comprehended by others in terms that align with the way that they understand their own identities. I found substantial opportunities for Sami people in Norway to celebrate their identities in ways that are meaningful to them without jeopardizing their recognizability as an Indigenous

people to the mainstream society and to the state. In fact, celebrations on and around Sami National Day bolster the recognizability of Sami people as a nation in terms of concepts of ethnicity and nationhood that are hegemonic within Norway. In the New England context, by contrast, the way Nipmuc people understand their own identities conflicts with the widely held assumptions both about race and identity and about Indigenous people specifically. For Nipmuc people, differences between their own understandings and the standards of the federal acknowledgment office were a very salient element of their experience of the recognition process. Seeking federal recognition through the administrative petitioning process became a new context in which Nipmucs were not legible as Indigenous, even though the standards applied through that process differed in the kinds of evidence they drew on when compared to in-person determinations of identity in everyday life.

Overall, these two cases reveal the importance of alignment between taken-for-granted ontologies of social difference and the legal models of identity that are written into legal and regulatory texts. These legal models are created with the intent to apply them uniformly, but ultimately their application requires interpretation, with the degree of interpretation involved determined in part by the kind of process inscribed in the law or regulation that is in effect. Ontologies of the sort that Gal and Irvine (2019) call semiotic ideologies also play an important role because they create the conditions for which things appear as signs and the degree to which those signs are understood as authoritative. Even though legal models are created with the intent to make authoritative, even “final” determinations of identity, in their application to real people and by real people they employ social models that remain open to transformation through their circulation (Agha

2007) or along “chains of abduction” (Gal and Irvine 2019, 15 cf. Peirce 1955). As Gal and Irvine (2019, 16) have so aptly stated, “the use and uptake of signs is embedded in the flow of social life.” What I have sought to demonstrate is the way this is the case even where authorities purport to make determinations of authenticity according to legal models of identity.

Directions for Future Research

Bringing together two distinct research contexts in this study of Indigenous recognition has proven fruitful for illuminating similarities and differences across cases, but these insights have come at the cost of my ability to engage with either of the two contexts as deeply as I would have liked in this dissertation. Therefore, I conclude the dissertation with directions for future work. I include ideas that emerged out of the broader set of experiences that constituted my fieldwork in Norway and in the United States in 2016–2019 that are not fully reflected in this manuscript.

Diversity of Indigenous Experiences Within the Same Societal Setting

In this dissertation, I have focused on the naturalized ontologies that guide determinations of identity and how these cultural models are related to explicit legal models articulating criteria for the acknowledgment of authentically Indigenous persons and groups for the purposes of the state. Because I focus on similarities and differences across two distinct contexts, my ability to delve into the how different individuals within Sami and Nipmuc social categories experience these models is limited. I have given a sense, at points, of how local models of identity can differ from sociohistoric models (or

ontologies) that can overdetermine who is widely perceived as Indigenous and who struggles to claim the same identity with the same degree of authority. However, from my ethnographic research in these two contexts, it was readily apparent to me that experiences of social recognizability differ within both the Sami and Nipmuc social categories. Nipmuc interlocutors talked about the different ways that Nipmuc people—even members of the same families—are perceived by others based on their appearance and how it is read as an indicator of identity according to racial rubrics. Such contemporary readings are sidelined by the use of historical evidence as a major component of federal acknowledgment determinations, but even there, racial rubrics of centuries past have clear determining effects for the outcomes of contemporary evaluations of group authenticity (Gould 2013; Thee 2006).

It is true that the Norwegian Sami Act's voter enrollment criteria draw on widespread language ideologies that link linguistic practices and identity. But it would be inaccurate to act as though these semiotic ideologies, closely linked to the form of ethnonationalism that is the topic of Chapter 6, are the *only* ones operating among Sami people in Norway.²²⁵ Indeed, the degree to which people identify with or resist a Sami/Norwegian binary is notable enough to have been the subject of several anthropological analyses already (Saugestad 2012b; Thuen 2012). The recognition of the Sami, the inscription of a legal model of Sami subjectivity in the Sami Act, and the various institutions, events, and associations that focus on what Díaz de Rada (2015) has called a universalistic Sami ethnos may make it more difficult to resist the ethnic/national frame for identity, but it does not make it impossible. Sami people relate to each other in

²²⁵ Indeed, as Gal and Irvine (2019, 16) have pointed out, every ideology implies an alternative.

a variety of ways, not all of which focus so overtly on ethnicity (Díaz de Rada 2015, 487–490). And yet, an ethnonational frame that privileges language as the key to identity is central to ethnic formations in Norway in a way that potentially further marginalizes those who—through family histories affected by the Norwegianization imperative—may not have access to competence in a Sami language today.

Even though some cultural models, arguably, are further naturalized through their inclusion in legal models, the use of these criteria in explicit models of Sami identity can also open them to critique. During my fieldwork in 2018, I came across a video created for social media by NRK Sápmi, the Sami arm of the Norwegian public broadcaster (itself, arguably an outcome of Sami political recognition [Rasmussen et al. 2021, 28–30]) that provides one example of this kind of tendency. In the video, the producer and main character, filming herself on her cell phone, visits the Sami Parliament in Karasjok to ask about whether she can register to vote. The video is part of a series called “#Samish”—a play on words using the English-language ending “-ish” used for approximation or diluteness in place of the normal ending “-isk” for the word *samisk* in Norwegian (adjective form of *same*, Sami). The young woman is from Finnmark and of Sami descent, but she was not raised speaking a Sami language. She is aware of how, because of this, she might not qualify for enrollment as a Sami Parliament voter. When she asks a staff person at the Parliament, she is told that though she may *feel* she is Sami, she will never qualify to vote in the Parliament because she does not have Sami language as a “home language.” Her children, who are being raised to speak Sami, can qualify. In a scene shot back at home, the woman reflects on these “rules for being Sami” (*reglan for å være samisk*, Norwegian, Finnmark dialect), as she mockingly calls them. She taps her

chest and declares that identity comes “from here” not from the language a person speaks or the civil servant quoting the formal rules. Her logic mirrors the use of the word *hjertespråk* (“heart language”) to describe peoples’ relationship to Sami, instead of *hjemmespråk* (home language) or *morsmål* (mother tongue), that I encountered regularly during my fieldwork. In this video, the fact that language serves as one of the official “rules for being Sami” opens the criterion for direct critique. The notable public response to the series demonstrates the degree to the video makes public discussions that are ongoing in private settings across Sápmi (Norvang-Herstrøm 2018). It is worth considering, in any context, who is marginal according to a legal model; however, this is perhaps especially the case where that explicit model mirrors widespread, implicit, sociohistoric models of identity.

There are also other axes along which diversity in experiences of recognition run, and not all of them align with the criteria of sociohistoric or legal models of Indigeneity. Notably, in my research, a person’s position in generational time emerged as one such relevant axis affecting a person’s experiences of both social recognizability and political recognition. Quite clearly, this research shows that the experiences of those who participated in the establishment of forms of recognition or in the processes for seeking recognized status were distinct from those of younger people, who grew up with these policies, processes, and institutions already in place. Even as these were not the specific focus of this research, the intergenerational timescale examined in this study reveals some of the dynamics of continuity, remembering, and reclaiming of the central questions about the position, the rights, the resources that recognition was supposed to mediate or entail.

For instance, many of the participants at the Forum meeting that is the focus of Chapter 7 expressed outrage over changed in the state's stance on its own role in supporting Indigenous rights. The most senior participants were most vocal on this issue, pointing to a shift from an older status quo, under which state mandates would shape the actions and commitments of agencies, toward a present in which the state seemed to abdicate any special responsibility for Indigenous questions, viewing Indigenous people and their advocates as an interest group, like any other. Many of the attendees were immersed a two day long process of trying to understand how the ministry was thinking about issues, how it was that their meeting had been defunded and how funding might be restored. Perhaps the groups should focus on talking about their work in terms of the UN Sustainable Development Goals or maybe they should mobilize longstanding beliefs in Nordic exceptionalism in their arguments to Danida (the Danish development directorate) and Norad. The suggestions were many but none moved toward any concrete plan. At one point, a young Sami woman interrupted this repeating cycle of possible options. "We need to think differently," she said to the group, "We need to think not only about what Norad wants but we want and what we can do about it."

The Norad representative in the room agreed with her right away: "People keep asking what the Ministry wants at Norad... my advice to you is don't expect much from Norad, but do it yourself. That's best advice I can give." While the lack of a state mandate, and the state funding that come with it, was a substantial shift for the older attendees who had really experienced a different reality during their careers, this shift, though troubling, seems to be understood as unavoidable by those who, due to their age, had not personally experienced the earlier decades of Sami activism and state response.

Like many of the North American attendees at the Forum meeting in 2016, these younger people lacked firsthand experience with an alternative to market-driven discourse as a part of state discourse. Their visions for what Sami self-determination might look like going forward are distinct from those who have been involved firsthand (and as adults) in the recognition history of the 1970s–1990s.

Further scholarly work on Indigenous recognition would benefit from looking at recognition from an explicitly intergenerational perspective. This would reveal the linkages between meanings of recognition and experiences of recognition over time, demonstrating how political recognition becomes a distinct terrain of Indigenous experience alongside the social recognizability that successive generations of Indigenous people have navigated in their own unique historical moments. My research has emphasized that even as political recognition is often considered to be an act (a performative act that creates the conditions it describes), this is not necessarily how political recognition of Indigenous peoples actually plays out. Instead, the recognized status becomes something that Indigenous communities live with over generational time; experiences of recognition are not static or universal even within the same community. The meaning of recognition should therefore be expected to continue to change, all the more so as the entailments of recognition remain more open to change than recognition policies would lead one to expect. For Indigenous communities, this kind of scholarly work could become an important form of storywork, connecting Indigenous people across generations and contributing to common understandings of collective historical experiences (see Atalay 2020 on the potential benefits of this kind of work).

The Particularity of National Majority Societies:

Returning to the Need for the Study of the Political Organization of Signification

The *content* of sociohistoric models of identity and the legal models of Indigeneity introduced as a part of recognition measures in 1970s and 1980s matter in another important way, aside from how they position some people as central to an image of Indigenous difference and others as marginal to it. In a comparison between the Nipmuc and Sami contexts, the contents of these models are distinct in terms of the degree to which their constituent signs are things people *do* (behavioral signs) versus the degree to which they are based on physical appearance or more complex signs (like genealogical records or historical evidence). As I outlined in Chapter 2, much of the literature examining identity in semiotic anthropology focuses on behavioral signs, especially on communicative practices. This group includes the scholars of language ideologies whom Eisenlohr (2006, 18) described as studying “the political organization of signifying practices.” In the Introduction, I noted that in this dissertation I undertake a project that, in my conception of it, constitutes a study of the political organization of *signification*, rather than of only signifying *practices* because it pays more attention to the role of perception in the production of meaning in semiotic encounters. While I take Eisenlohr’s (2006) point that reflexive reanalysis, carried out through language, is a signifying practice, I still find it important to consider those “things” that only become signs of identity through perception. These are not communicative signs; they are not “conduct” (Agha 2007, 22; Gal and Irvine 2019, 24). And yet, they play an important role

in semiotic encounters. In this examination of Indigenous recognition, they are precisely the kind of signs that come to be determining of Indigenous experiences of misrecognition.

Sociohistoric models of Sami identity that have long circulated in Norway and throughout Sápmi have, at some points, defined Sami ways of life not *intended* as social indexical signs, as critical signs of Sami-ness. The stereotypic association of reindeer herding with Sami people is an example of this kind of pattern. That particular indexical link eventually produced legal doctrine in Norway reserving the right to herd reindeer to particular Sami families (Bull 2015). Practices like reindeer herding can become signs of identity even though they serve other primary purposes as means of subsistence, just as language can become a sign of identity even as it also serves an important referential function.

There exist other perceivable things, however, that can be taken as signs of both identity and inferiority, which, because they are not actions, deprive the subject about whom they are taken as signs of identity of any control over the determinations of identity that follow from them. When features of embodiment are taken as signs of identity, they become signs of identity through their role in the mental models employed by perceiving subjects, not because agentive actors deploy them as signs. In the Sami context, the most archetypal example of this is the early 20th century practice of anthropometry practiced on Sami people by race biologists from the Scandinavian scientific establishments.²²⁶ These interactions centered on “reading” features of

²²⁶ E.M. Fjellheim (2020) and Dankertsen (2019) provide recent reflections on these histories from their position as Sami social scientists, which are well-worth consulting for this history, in addition to accounts that focus on race biology in Scandinavia more broadly.

embodiment that, in other contexts, were not imbued with any particular meaning. Indeed, the signs “read” in these encounters may not even have been perceivable in the absence of race biologists’ technologies of measurement and the racial ideologies that accompanied them to make the observation of a person’s cranium a semiotic event.

These histories haunt contemporary sociohistoric models of Sami identity. Indeed, skepticism about the authenticity of one’s Sami identity based on appearance is still an evident part not only of private conversations but of public remarks in Norway (E.M. Fjellheim 2020, 212). However, today other signs predominate as the essential criteria defining the Sami social category. Determinations of Sami identity are the result of reading across multiple channels, but language is taken as a more essential sign than most, with mastery of a Sami language received as a definitive sign of Sami-ness.

As I have noted above, such assumptions about language as a sign of identity are a critical part of the Sami Act’s criteria. The fact that this criterion is based in *actions* a person can take has implications. The Sami Act criteria do allow for increasing numbers of people to become eligible to participate in the Norwegian Sami Parliament over time (though, because the criterion is the use of Sami as a home language, rather than linguistic competence, the process would be long-term). Those families who lost the use of Sami language during Norwegianization could regain the use of the language, perhaps through engagement with one of many language revitalization efforts, and if they were to raise their children speaking Sami, those children would be perfectly qualified to participate in the Sami political institution as well.

This differs quite notably from the determinations made through the administrative federal acknowledgment process in the United States. The premise of the

majority of the seven criteria is *continuity across time*. The perceivable things that become evidence in a federal acknowledgment petition are what Agha (2007) calls complex signs, signs that are themselves the outcome of other sign processes, the *products* of other semiotic events. As we have seen in the Nipmuc case, these can be the traces of past determinations of identity. Earle's (1861, lxxv) observations and deductions in the 19th century, recorded in the designation "Miscellaneous Indian" in official state reports created an inscription that was be read as sign in the present of the federal acknowledgment process of the 1990s and 2000s.²²⁷ When read by Nipmuc tribal members and their research team, that inscription is understood in one way, based on their contextual knowledge and their ontologies; when read by the staff at the federal acknowledgment office, it is taken as a straightforward sign of identity (Gould 2013, 218). The assumptions that structure what counts as evidence and the racial rubrics written into some forms of historical evidence come together to make Nipmuc people illegible according to the modes of perception applied by government authorities, whether the 19th century Indian Commissioners of Massachusetts or the 21st century staff of the Office of Federal Acknowledgment.

The administrative federal acknowledgment process demands continuity over time, as have judicial approaches to the existence of Indigenous groups as tribes (see Campisi 1991). Because of this, eligibility according to the criteria does not work at all the same way as the criteria of the Sami Act. Where the Sami Act evaluates only a single person's lifetime in terms of their language practices (taken in combination with information about descent), the US federal acknowledgment criteria require unbroken

²²⁷ See Gould (2013) for further discussion of how these designations impacted the Nipmuc federal acknowledgment attempt.

evidence stretching back into generational time. Any break in the chain, a period of years in which community continuity or political authority of the tribe cannot be clearly documented, can threaten the ability of a group to receive a positive final determination, even when those factors can be clearly established both before and after the gap (Grabowski 2018, interview with the author). Both the construction of these complex signs *as* signs and the meanings read from them are largely a matter of the assumptions that the perceiving—or evaluating—subjects bring to semiotic encounters. These evaluators’ acts of meaning-making in making determinations about the past have implications for Nipmuc people, or any other petitioning group, in the present. The agency of Nipmuc people does not extend to refiguring the meaning of the criteria or the forms of evidence that will be accepted. Petitioning tribes are limited to trying to “fit in the box” of the already-established criteria and the authorities’ practices of evaluating a petition document in light of them (Holley 2018, interview with the author).

In a way that mirrors this one-sided scrutiny, Native people in New England face racial rubrics that read features of their embodiment—the quintessential other-than-behavioral signs—as signs of their membership in ethnoracial categories. As Rosa and Flores (2017a, 2017b) have pointed out, in the US context, these racial readings overdetermine how behavioral signs are perceived and construed. Here meaning-making rests importantly on what the perceiving subject brings to their reading of another’s identity; the signifying practices—indeed the actions of any kind—of the person whose identity is being read has only secondary importance because it is interpreted in light of formative determination about race.

This, in this dissertation, I set out to “follow the model” for both the sociohistoric models of identity and the explicit legal models of Indigeneity included in policy measures mediating official recognition of Indigenous people in the United States and Norway. Guided by my research questions, I followed these models through Indigenous peoples’ experiences of them. In doing so, I was able to highlight certain underrecognized realities about the nature of political recognition of Indigenous people through the three commonalities across the Sami and Nipmuc experiences of political recognition processes and outcomes conveyed in Chapters 3, 4, and 7. In looking to the relationship between the rules of political recognition and the criteria that comprise sociohistoric models of Indigenous identity in Chapter 5 and 6, I was able to highlight how social recognizability provides an important foundation for political forms of recognition. I demonstrated how, in the Norwegian case, political recognition can contribute venues for increasing the social recognizability of the Sami as a people, understood according to widely naturalized concepts of ethnicity and nationality. In the Nipmuc case, I presented an analysis of Nipmuc experiences of social misrecognition and political non-recognition as two forms of illegibility that place them at a lower position in hierarchies of authenticity, not just among non-Native publics but among other Native Americans as well.

Reaching the end of this particular inquiry, it is clear to me how important and how overdetermining the assumptions around Indigeneity are within each of these two national contexts. Each of these mainstream ontologies appears as distinct, as particular when viewed in light of the other. The particularity of these understandings and the way they shape what is taken as a sign of identity—and as *defining*, or essential (Agha 2007,

74–75) signs of identity—merit further examination. Building from our knowledge of how Indigenous people experience these forms of recognition, it will be important to develop further studies that examine the models and modes of perception on the part of the dominant society. Whereas historians have already examined how some of these sociohistoric models persist over centuries (e.g., O’Brien 2010), there are few ethnographic accounts that examine how they continue to be reproduced in the present. Raising awareness of models that are so naturalized that, within their own societal contexts, they are not understood as particular is something that anthropologists are well-positioned to contribute. Denaturalizing these ontologies and tracing their reproduction to concrete settings and practices may well uncover, and even constitute, new ways of contesting them (Inoue 2006, 281).

By Way of Conclusion

Pairing Nipmuc and Sami stories of recognition together and following them across a timescale of decades has opened as many questions as it has delivered concrete insights. For me, trying to begin to understand these two histories has been a transformative journey, for which I can only thank the many people who shared their own experiences and analyses with me, helping me make sense of both a place I had never been before I started the fieldwork for this dissertation and a region where I grew up and have spent most of my adult life. I learned to see the latter in a new way, a journey that Sami interlocutors set me on through their commitments to the comparative study of Indigenous experience.

Neither of the two stories I draw on in this dissertation is by any means over. This reality is demonstrable in the ongoing and dynamic actions of both Sami and Nipmuc people. However, the Nipmuc case provides an example which, because of its timing and its nature makes an apt [example] with which to end this dissertation. After I had wrapped up this research and nearly all of the writing, when I was in the final stage of edits to the manuscript. I opened my email one day to a letter, forwarded by Rae Gould to the Five College Native and Indigenous Studies network's email list, a source of updates on regional and national events, news, and opportunities that I had followed throughout the years I worked on this dissertation research. Dr. Gould was forwarding a letter signed by thirteen Nipmucs, first among them Cheryll Toney Holley, signing as *sonksq*. The PDF file was titled "Tribal Name Change Letter" and it began:

Greetings-

This letter is notification that the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band have separated from and are no longer part of the non-profit Nipmuc Nation organization, the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council Inc., or its affiliated website. We declare that the Nipmuc Nation is hereby dissolved. (Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band Council 2022)

The letter goes on to explain, in brief, the history of Nipmuc Nation, describing the organization as having been founded "as the vehicle to facilitate federal recognition." The letter recounts in short form the history of the removals from the tribal roll that accompanied later events in the recognition process before concluding with the following passage:

After careful consideration, the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band Council believes that the best way for the Nipmuc community to thrive and remain a strong and united people is by severing ties with the defunct Nipmuc Nation organization and the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council, Inc. Nipmuc families that were removed in 2002 are now restored to the Hassanamisco tribal roll. We are determined to secure a future for our people by embracing our ancestral values of community and culture. The Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band Council affirms its commitment to

support all Nipmuc People and to always act in the best interest of the Nipmuc community. (Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band Council 2022)

Nipmuc people continue to react and adapt, to reconsider past decisions and to choose ways forward that may be different from the decisions made in the past. Though I had not known for sure that this news would follow quickly on the completion this dissertation, neither was I surprised by the news. Several of the Nipmuc people I interviewed in 2018, in the wake of the end to the most recent appeal in court, had suggested that maybe the upside of not being federally recognized was a greater flexibility. This sentiment was expressed both by interviewees who appear as signatories to the 2022 letter and some who do not. Everyone I spoke with had a clear understanding that identity, belonging, and the social acknowledgment of Indigenous identity within and beyond Indigenous communities is much more complex than any “final determination.” Though the circumstances were different in Norway, this understanding among Indigenous people of the complexities of Indigenous identity and its acknowledgment were clearly evident there as well, both in the interviews I conducted and in much of the public discourse on Sami identity in the media that I followed throughout my fieldwork.

I began this dissertation by remarking on how recognition is a fundamental element of human social life, not just for Indigenous people, though for Indigenous people recognition has come to mean something more particular over the course of past decades and over the longer timespan during which they have endured and resisted colonization. Studying social recognizability and experiences of (non)recognition reveals the degree to which we conceive who we are through our reanalysis of our relations with others. We are who we are not just for but through others. The impulse of colonial power to fix social categories and to know, with certainty, what is owed to whom sits

awkwardly with the way culture is produced, reproduced, and transformed through interaction. In this dissertation, official forms of recognition are often out of step with the grounds of social recognition as those are reanalyzed and reconfigured across a range of settings and by a range of actors.

As much as colonial governance structures aim to fix certain social and political arrangements in time, no single determination is really final. The very cultural models by which Indigeneity is understood continue to change. Indigenous people continue to pursue a multiplicity of decolonial projects. These feed into and transform ongoing historical chains of semiosis, opening up new meanings and possibilities and embodying the reality that even the most persistent of colonial hierarchies is not, in any final way, settled.

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