Master Thesis

North American Studies

Native American Participation During The Second World War In Europe And North Africa: What Drove Them To Enlist and How They Experienced Their Time Overseas.

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Introduction:

John D. Brown, a full blood Choctaw from Oklahoma, served with the 45th Infantry Division nicknamed Thunderbird during the Second World War. He was deployed to various locations in North Africa, and Europe. North Africa was a practice run for him, but he fought in Sicily, Naples, Anzio, Southern France, Germany and Austria.[1] In Germany, Brown saw the horrors at the Dachau concentration camp. He was not the only Native American serving in the American military during the Second World War, however. 24,800 Native Americans fought in the Navy, Army or in the Marine Corps.

That Native Americans fought in such large numbers for and in the U.S. military is noteworthy, given that Native Americans and the American government had not always had the best relations. The American federal government, under the presidencies of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, orchestrated the Trail of Tears in the 1830s; many Native American tribes were forcibly relocated to Indian Territory, present day Oklahoma. The genocidal impact of the Indian residential schools as Ward Churchill argues in his book, still occurred; although not on a large scale as it was a few decades ago.[2] It had only been a mere 15 years ago that the Indian Citizenship Act, or the Snyder Act passed, granting all Native Americans U.S. citizenship in 1924.

Despite all that, Native Americans voluntarily enlisted in considerable numbers in the U.S. Armed Forces, prior and after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in the Second World War. They were involved in every theater of operations, from Europe to North Africa and the Pacific, where they made big contributions to the American war effort. This thesis analyzes

[1] Brown, interview, 12:12-40:00.
[2] Ward Churchill, Kill the Indian, Save the Man: the Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools (City Light Books; San Francisco, 2004).

Native Americans and their involvement in the Second World. What drove them to enlist in those substantial numbers, and how did they experience their time overseas?

It took some time for the first comprehensive academic work to be published on Native American involvement in the Second World War because most of the focus before 1990 lay on Federal Indian policy, white-Indian relations during the wars, and how Native Americans were perceived by white U.S. civilians.[3] Tom Holm wrote an article in 1985 on the extent and legacy of the Native American participation in the Second World War, based mostly on members of the Sioux, Omaha, Osage, Cheyenne, Kiowa and Blackfoot tribes. Holm argues that the war revived warrior traditions in some Plain Indian communities but that the war was not exclusively beneficial for Native Americans.[4]

Allison Bernstein added to that with her publication in 1991, on Native Americans and the Second World War. She argues that the war was more influential on the course of Indian Affairs than any other event. Her book analyses the impact of the war on Native American life.[5] Bernstein set the tone of the field for the upcoming decades, but she neglected to incorporate the oral history testimonies.[6] Although she paints a strong assimilationist picture there could have been more emphasize on the birth of modern Indian nationalism and the assertion of tribal sovereignty.[7] Jeré Franco and Kenneth Franco both echo Bernstein in large segments, but

[3] On the IRA of 1934, and the House Concurrent Resolution 108 of 1953. Alison Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, 1991) xi; Jere' Bishop Franco, *Crossing the Pond: The Native American effort in World War II* (University of North Texas Press; Denton, 1999) xiii; Robert M. Utley, *Last Days of Sioux Nation* Yale University Press; New Haven, 1966); Robert F. Berkhofer, T*he White Man's Indian : Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (Knopf; New York, 1979)

[4] Iverson, Peter ed., *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press; Norman, 1985) 149.

[5] Bernstein, American Indians and World War II, xi.

[6] Peter Iverson, 'Reviews of Books; American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs by Alison R. Bernstein', *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 61, No. 2 (1992): 304. Doris Duke funded the Doris Duke American Indian Oral History Program at seven State Universities to facilitate the creation of a database which stored Native American oral history interviews conducted in the period 1966-1972. Franco, *Crossing the Pond, xiii;* Deanne Durrett, *Unsung heroes of World War II; the story of the Navajo Code Talkers* (Facts on File, New York, 1998) 104.

[7] Peter Iverson, 'Reviews of Books; American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs by Alison R. Bernstein', *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 61, No. 2 (1992): 304.

elaborate more on the reasons behind Native American enlistment. Both also incorporate new material; Franco uses correspondence from the Santa Fe Indian Club in New Mexico and Townsend integrates the story of the Alaskan Aleuts into the existing narrative.[8]

The field was dormant until December 2019, when Scott R. Sheffield and Noah J. Riseman published their work. They incorporate eleven Native American testimonies from the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress; mostly veterans who served in the Pacific, but also four veterans who served in Europe and Africa. They integrated new motives behind voluntary enlistment, and elaborate on Native American experiences overseas.[9] Their work has one serious flaw: because of the scope of their comparative research they create breadth at the expense of depth.

This thesis, therefore, has a more narrow focus. It is on Native Americans who voluntary enlisted end served in the European and African theaters of operations only. The Pacific theater of operations has received much more attention than the other two because of the well documented service of the Code Talker Units, and will therefore not be included in this thesis. Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman all examined motives behind the Native American voluntary enlistment, some more thorough than others. They also analyze whether Native Americans experienced racial prejudice or discrimination. This thesis adds and examines two other motives behind Native American voluntary enlistment, and incorporates them within the existing narrative. Incorporating those two new motives behind Native American voluntary enlistment in the existing narrative provides for a more comprehensive account than is known today. This thesis further and more thoroughly analyzes to what extent

[8] Franco, *Crossing the Pond*, 154; Kenneth Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian* (University of New Mexico Press; Albuquerque, 2002) 192.
[9] Scott R. Sheffield and Noah J. Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War : The Politics, Experiences and Legacies of War in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 2019).

Native Americans experienced racial prejudice or discrimination, and therefore may depict a more detailed picture than heretofore known in the existing narrative.

All publications above date from before 2002, with the exception of Sheffield and Riseman. This means that only Sheffield and Riseman had the opportunity to incorporate in their research the treasure trove of Native American Oral History testimonies from the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress that were conducted after 2002**.** The works of Holm, Bernstein, Franco and Townsend all appeared before or in 2002. Volunteers from the project conducted interviews with Native American veterans who served in the Second World War and other armed conflicts. From those sources, Sheffield and Riseman only integrated 11 of these sources, which indicates that there still is a huge variety of untouched interviews waiting to be incorporated into the existing narrative. By analyzing and contextualizing them with the works of Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, Sheffield and Riseman they can be integrated in the existing narrative and further expand our knowledge and understanding on Native American involvement in the Second World War.

This thesis has its limits. It is based on oral history interviews, conducted approximately six decades ago after the veterans' involvement in the Second World War. Some veterans, unsurprisingly, therefore had trouble remembering correct dates and names of towns they went through. Some events had such an impact, however, that they were hard to forget. Whether they experienced racism or discrimination and what got them through the tough times, where and when they served, these are all topics that are discussed, making the interviews so valuable. There is tangible evidence that supports the Native American testimonies: their medals, decorations and ribbons alongside pictures that some veterans show during the interview of themselves in uniform overseas and in boot camp. The digitized interviews from the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress regarding Native American enlistees who fought in North Africa and Europe only produced 23 interviews. From

these interviews Sheffield and Riseman incorporated four; these are small numbers in regard to the total number of Native Americans enlistees serving in Europe and Africa. These Native American first-hand testimonies are still a welcome addition to the already existing narrative, however.

Some interviews provide more valuable information than others; the capability and character of the interviewer influences them greatly. Asking the right questions at the right time is a skill not all possess; because all interviews were conducted by volunteers, they vary in quality. Some interviewers place the veteran central, and mostly ask questions that subtly guide the interview; other interviewers assign themselves a more prominent role, asking leading questions and showing off their own knowledge. Some interviews are, therefore, not of the best quality, but even despite any lack of proficiency all the interviews provide useful information, which is the foundation for the second and third chapter of this thesis.

The first chapter of this thesis incorporates and analyzes some primary but mostly secondary works, like *Flag of Our Fathers,* written by James Bradley about Ira Hayes, the most famous Native American in the Second World War.[10] The chapter examines what has been published with regard to Native American involvement in the Second World War. The second chapter examines what motivated Native Americans to voluntarily enlist with the U.S. Armed Forces in such substantial numbers. The third chapter analyzes to what extent their Native American heritage impacted their experiences overseas and whether they experienced racial prejudice or suffered from discrimination. The second chapter is built on 15 interviews and the third chapter on 23 interviews. Some interviews have proven more useful than others, but this thesis ensures that all interviews are incorporated into the existing narrative of Native American involvement in the Second World War.

[10] James Bradley and Ron Powers, *Flag of our fathers; Heroes of Iwo Jima* (Delacorte Press; New York, 2001).

Chapter I: Extended Historical Debate of Native Americans and World War II

This chapter argues that while the Navajo are the most known and best studied area of the Native American involvement the Second World War, they were not the only Native American Code Talker Units serving overseas. Secondly, it provides an overview of the state of the field regarding Native American involvement in the Second World War. The contributions discussed in this chapter are not comprehensive narratives, but focus on particular themes, in contrast to Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman. That is why they are analyzed here, instead of in the introduction. It will not only be secondary works either, because some veterans wrote their biographies, and these provide us with additional, useful information. These works are also necessary if one wants to have a through grip on the state of the field on Native American involvement in the Second World War.

As stated above, Code Talker Units are the best studied area; they consisted of American Indians of the same tribe who could transmit messages for the U.S. troops on the front lines that were undecipherable for enemy troops. The Marine Corps started a pilot program with 29 Navajos, who proved to be so useful that many more were recruited. At the end, there were 450 Navajo recruited, of whom 420 saw actual combat in the Pacific.[11] Their stories are now well documented, because of the abundance of available primary sources .

Navajo Code Talkers received presidential attention too; starting with President Reagan who presented them with a Certificate of Recognition and declared August 14th 'Navajo Code Talkers Day' in 1982. President George H. W. Bush followed in 1990, declaring the month of November as National American Indian Heritage Month. In 2000, President Bill Clinton signed a law which awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the original 29 Code Talkers, and President George W. Bush presented the medals to four surviving Code Talkers in 2001.

[11] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 148.

President Barack Obama also showed respect for and honored Native Americans and the Code Talkers on multiple occasions, and Trump also contributed in 2017.[12]

The first publication on the subject of the Navajo Code Talkers came from Broderick Johnson and Keats Begay in 1978, shortly after the Doris Duke Collection was established at the University of Utah.[13] The collection consists of about 60 hours of interviews with the Navajo Code Talkers at their 1971 reunion. the work details the efforts and the experiences of the Navajo during World War II. Johnson and Begay have built upon 11 personal accounts, of which nine focus on the war years. The other three personal accounts provide insight in World War I and the tribal judiciary system.

Another important contribution came from Kenji Kawano, the official photographer of the Navajo Code Talkers Association, published a photo essay in 1990. He contrast a picture he took of the veteran present day with pictures taken back when they served in the military. There are some small pieces of text detailing the veterans' life next to the pictures, but the photos are key in his work.[14] This work is different than most other publications, because it focuses on photographs rather than analyzing the Navajo war efforts.

Margaret Bixler published on the Navajo Code Talkers in 1992.[15] She spent 11 years researching, making many trips to the Navajo Reservation. Bixler bases her book on interviews held with available Code Talkers and tribal leaders on the Navajo Reservation, as well as interviews from the Doris Duke Collection, and archival material from the Marine Corps.[16] It

[12] The Code Talkers Once More, With Respect', *The HuffPost,* November 29th 2017 (accessed on March 19th 2020)
[13] Keats Begay, and Broderick Johnson, ed., *Navajo and World War II* (Navajo Community College Press; Tsaile, 1978).
[14] Kenji Kawano, *Warriors: Navajo Code Talkers* (Northland Publishing; Flagstaff, 1990).
[15] Margaret Bixler, *Winds of Freedom: the Story of the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II* (Two Bytes; Darien, 1992).
[16] Bixler, *Winds of Freedom,* backflip, and xxi.

is her objective to inform people about the war experiences, and the change that followed as a result of the efforts of the young people who served as Navajo Code Talkers.[17]

Deanne Durrett aimed at achieving a similar goal with her publication of *Unsung Heroes of World War II* in 1998. She wanted to make sure that the sacrifices of the Navajo Code Talkers were not forgotten.[18] She based her work largely on the Doris Duke Collection of the University of Utah. Durrett succeeded in her goal, but she could have dedicated more than just ten pages to the postwar years. It feels like she should have put more effort into that because the source material, notably the oral history interviews, was available.

There are documentaries and children's books available on the subject of Navajo Code Talkers, demonstrating again that they are the best known and documented area of American Indian involvement in the Second World War.[19]

Not all publications on the Navajo Code Talkers are secondary, however. In 2011, Chester Nez, one of the 29 members of the original Navajo Code Talker Unit published his memoirs with help of Judith Schiess-Avila. Besides the war and postwar experiences, Nez talks about his childhood which was representative in large parts of the youth of an entire generation of Navajos. The value of his book is that it portrays the experiences, the life and stories of a Navajo Code Talker at firsthand, with Schiess-Avila recording more than 75 hours of interviews and talks.[20] His post war years are well documented, including a detailed account of how Nez experienced his return to American society in 1945. Nez also talks about the attention and ceremonies the Navajos got after their involvement in the Second World War was declassified. One flaw of this book is that it does not have a table of contents, which makes it harder to get

[17] Bixler, *Winds of Freedom,* xiv.
[18] Durrett, *Unsung heroes,* vi.
[19] Just to name a few: *True Whisperers,* Directed by Valerie Red-Horse, Red-Horse Production, 2002, *The Navajo Code Talkers: The epic story,* Directed by Allen Silliphant, Tully Entertainment, 1994, Joseph Bruchac, *Chester Nez and the unbreakable code: a Navajo code talker's story* (Albert Whitman & Company; Park Ridge, 2018), J. Patrick Lewis, *The Navajo code talkers* (Creative Editions; Mankoto, 2016)
[20] Nez, *Code Talker,* 3-4.

an overview of all that is discusses. It is interesting that the process of the decoding and encoding is described by analyzing the cryptographic principles used.

The Navajo were not the only Native Americans that served in Code Talker Units. Andrea M. Page published about the lesser known Sioux Code Talkers of the Second World War in 2017. Her great-uncle John Bear served with this unit, and it was the objective of Page to document her family's history. There were only six men who served alongside John Bear as Sioux Code Talkers of the 302nd Reconnaissance Troop, nicknamed 'MacArthur's Boys', as part of the First Cavalry Division. That is quite a contrast with the original Navajo Code Talker Unit numbering 29 men. The Sioux in the unit belonged to the Standing Rock, Cheyenne, Santree, Oglala, Cow Creek and Sisseton-Wahpeton tribes.[21] They served in the Pacific, as did the Navajos. The last chapter is dedicated to the reintegration back into American society after the war, which provides a clear overview of the struggles they faced returning home. William C. Meadows wrote about the Comanche Code Talkers in 2009.[22] The Comanche Code Talkers served with the Army's 4th Infantry Division, and unlike the Navajo and Sioux they had to wait some time before they saw action when they were deployment to the European Theater. They numbered 17 men, but only 13 actually served in Europe, starting with D-Day.

Although Chester Nez's memoir might be best known, there were other Native American veterans who published their biographies. Hollis D. Stabler, an Omaha Indian, wrote his memoirs with the help of Victoria Smith in 2005.[23] Stabler talks about his experiences during Operations Torch, Husky, Shingle and Anvil/Dragoon in Northern Africa and Sicily, Italy and France, lesser known locations of duty for Native Americans during the Second World War. They make up four of the seven chapters. Stabler's childhood and his reintegration into American society after the war are discussed vividly too. Smith did a remarkable job of

[21] Page, *Sioux Code Talkers,* 57.
[22] Meadows, *The Comanche Code Talkers.*
[23] Stabler and Smith, *The World War Memoirs of an Omaha Indian.*

providing each of Stabler's anecdotes with thorough historical context, without diminishing the presence of Stabler's voice.

Loren Duke Abdalla, great-grandson of Chief Running Bull of the Yankton Sioux, wrote his biography with help of Donna King-Nykolaycuyk.[24] Abdalla served with the 1st Regiment in the Pacific under Colonel Chesty Puller and took part in the tough island battles of Peleliu and Okinawa. King-Nykolaycuyk not only analyzes Abdalla's combat experiences, but she also examines his postwar years. The book is yet another example of how much attention Native American veterans who served in the Pacific received over the ones who served in Africa and Europe.

James Bradley published about the original flag raisers of Iwo Jima, and examined their lives. His dad 'Doc' Bradley, was one of the six flag raisers on Iwo Jima, who never talked about his war experiences. In 2001, after his dad had passed James Bradley published a book on the lives of the men.[25] One of them was Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian of the Gila River Indian Reservation, who enlisted nine months after Pearl Harbor. Hayes is the best known Native American World War II veteran, alongside Ernest Childers a Creek from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.[26] Bradley conducted interviews with Hayes's old school mates, ex-colleagues from the Marine Corps, and Hayes's only three living relatives to better understand Hayes's motives and actions.[27] The book was eventually made into a movie of the same title in 2006 by Clint Eastwood.[28]

Not all research limits itself to the experiences of Native Americans overseas; Noah Riseman made an interesting contributing in 2012 when he wrote a comparative analyses of the Papua New Guineans, the Yolngu of Australia and the Navajo of the United States, and their

[24] King-Nykolaycuyk, *Stand Like a Man.*
[25] Bradley, Flag of our fathers.
[26] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 129.
[27] Bradley, Flag of our fathers, 20-22.
[28] Flag of our fathers, Directed by Clint Eastwood, DreamWorks Pictures, 2006.

relationship with their other 'white' countrymen during World War II.[29] Alison Bernstein states that Riseman was the first one to compare male Indigenous groups since James O. Gumps significant contribution in 1994, but in contrast to Gump's classic, Riseman is more interested in the experiences of these tribes when they fought on behalf of their 'colonizers' against a common adversary.[30] According to Martin Crotty 'Riseman is dismissive of the idea that the indigenous peoples were loyal citizens who displayed patriotism by willingly fighting for their nations', and Crotty says that Riseman's three cases are not really compatible, because the Navajo, for instance, were not pressured into enlisting, and did that voluntarily.[31] Tristan Moss argues that although his analysis of the treatment of Indigenous soldiers during and after the Second World War is placed within the context of race relations, it could have been integrated better with the time's broader military and political context.[32] I have to agree with Bernstein, Crotty and Moss, who all seem convinced that the inclusion of the Navajo Code Talkers weakens Riseman's overall argument, with the Navajos being the exception to most rules. The Navajo were applauded for their bravery by fellow non-native soldiers and acquired many military honors, and they enlisting voluntarily to fight for their nation.

Publications on Native American participation in the Second World War, therefore, mostly focused on the Navajo Code Talkers, and their involvement in the Pacific. There are not only scholarly secondary works available, but also firsthand accounts like the biography of Chester Nez, one of the original 29 Code Talkers. All these publications above sum up the state of the field, regarding the Native American participation in the Second World War. There are limited publications that focus solely on the North African and European front. Stabler and

[29] Riseman, *Defending Who's Country?*
[30] Alison Bernstein, 'Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War', *The Journal of American History,* Vol. 100, No. 4 (2014) 1255, James O. Gump, *The dust rose like smoke: the subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux* (University of Nebraska Press; Lincoln, 1994).
[31] Martin Crotty, 'Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War', *Journal of Australian Studies,* Vol.39, No. 1 (2015) 108-09.
[32] Tristan Moss, 'Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War', *The Journal of Pacific History,* Vol.49, No. 3 (2014) 369-70.

Smith, and Meadows are the only two who focus solely on European theater. Most information on the North African and European campaign's come from Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, Sheffield and Riseman. Therefore is the focus of this thesis is confined to Native Americans who served in North Africa and Europe, because those theaters of operations deserve more attention than they have received so far.

Chapter II: Reasons behind Native American Enlistment

This chapter examines the different motives behind Native American enlistment in the Armed Forces during the Second World War. Firstly, I argue that the majority of oral history testimonies from the Veterans History Project of the American Folklore Center of the Library of Congress confirm and fit in with the already existing narrative as framed by Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman. Native Americans enlisted, for instance, because of patriotism, financial enticements, to gain status within their tribal community, and out of a sense of adventure. Secondly, I argue that there are two motives that have not been incorporated into the existing narrative yet. One is because of stories on the poor way draftees got treated during the Second World War. As an enlistee, Glenn Moore thought, one had a better chance to avoid that poor treatment. Another motive to enlist is that as an enlistee you would have some say in where and with what service branch one would end up. War and the draft seemed imminent at the time, and some, like John R. Milne, thought it was better to at least have some influence in the decision-making process.

Albert R. Mora was born into an Apache family on September 17, 1924 in Garfield, New Mexico. When the Second World War broke out, Mora said 'I live here in the USA, and I want to help as much as I can', so he enlisted in the Army in September 1943. Because Mora was 17 at that time, he had to wait 20 days till he turned 18. He was sent to Fort Bliss, close to El Paso, Texas, for bootcamp. It was a change of scenery from a small town to army life, but Mora reminisces that he liked his mates and made many friends there. In Camp Hood, Texas, where he learned to operate machine-guns and tanks, he became a gunner, shooting from inside the tank.[33]

Mora enlisted for patriotic reasons. He felt part of the United States and wanted to protect its lands and rights. Robert Charles Spiegelhalter also enlisted out of patriotism. His

[33] Mora, interview, 12:57-18:00.

testimony is described in the next paragraph, after which other incentives for voluntary enlistment are explained.

Spiegelhalter was born on May 5, 1921 and grew up in Pennsylvania, in a big house. Because of financial problems, his family had to live with his grandfather. Spiegelhalter recalled that time as unpleasant, because his grandfather ruled with an iron fist, and called him a 'dirty no good Indian just like his mother'. He stole and did what he had to survive. When the opportunity came for Spiegelhalter to travel to Montana to work with the Civilians Conservation Corps, he happily took it. He wanted to stay there after his time with the Conservation Corps finished, so he solicited for a job with the Forest Service. But war seemed imminent at that time, so the Forest Service had no place for him, because they feared he would be drafted when the war broke out. Instead Spiegelhalter took a job at Brattle Steel where he worked for another year and a half, until the war did eventually break out. On December 7th Spiegelhalter was just hanging around a poolroom, playing the table and smoking cigarettes when he heard about the attack on Pearl Harbour. 'Everybody was going mad, so the following morning we were down at the post office, no we slept there that night in the winter, we slept there on the steps with newspapers covering us so we could enlist in the Navy, Army or where we wanted.' Ignoring his father and grandfather's pleas to join the Army, Spiegelhalter enlisted in the Navy. He stayed in Rhode Island where he went to gunnery school for 16 weeks. After that, he attended 'submarine chasing school' in Florida. In reality they were just waiting there for their ship to be built so they could be on their way. Spiegelhalter waited four months and was kept busy with patrol duty in the meantime. There were few experienced sailors on his crew, most of them had no clue what they were supposed to do. On their first mission German submarines sunk eight ships of Spiegelhalters convoy.[34]

[34] Spiegelhalter, interview, 02:30-12:53.

Like Mora and Spiegelhalter, the majority of the Native Americans voluntarily enlisted because of patriotic sentiments.[35] The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941 proved to be of huge influence and spurred the enlistment rate all over the United States. Marion F. Cooper felt angry with the Japanese, because they had bombed 'Pearl Harbor with a sneak attack like they did', and therefore sought vengeance.[36] Pearl Harbor, therefore, instigated an increase in voluntarily enlistment. One week before Pearl Harbor there were 4,500 Native Americans in the armed forces, of whom sixty percent had voluntarily enlisted.[37] According to Holm, Bernstein, and Franco there were 5,500 Native American voluntarily enlisted by June 30, 1942, of whom 4,100 had been inducted in the service; the overall number of Native Americans in the military service numbered about 7,500 Native Americans enlistees in the military service in the summer of 1942. By the end of October 1942 the number of Native Americans in the military service had increased to 10,000. By the time the war came to an end, there were approximately 25,000 Native Americans in the military service.[38]

Marion F. Cooper also enlisted in the military service because of the desire of vengeance, just like Spiegelhalter.[39] Mora's reason for enlisting was patriotic too, but he enlisted to help his country in time of need, what speaks more of a sense of inclusion than vengeance. Native Americans, therefore, jumped to the assistance of the 'country' with which most of their tribes had been at war just fifty years ago, and which had not even considered them citizens until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

The patriotic enthusiasm of the Native Americans can be explained by various factors.

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[35] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 63; Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 85; Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 72-78; Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 42.
[36] Cooper, interview, 03:27; Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 78.
[37] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 61; Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 78.
[38] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 62; Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 42; Iverson ed., *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century*, 152.
[39] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 78; Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 42; Cooper, interview, 03:27.

For one, improvements made on Indian reservations under the Indian Reorganization Act inspired Indian patriotism, as Commissioner Collier of the Office of Indian Affairs had believed it would.[40] Secondly, the Indian Reorganization Act can be seen as the government's intention to alter white-Indian relations, reconstruct Native American communities, and allow for some kind of self-determination. Townsend argues that with the IRA the government sent out a signal that admitted the wrongdoings of previous administrations and sought active Indian participation in rectifying them.[41] Native Americans would be included in the decision making progress more frequently and Washington's policies would no longer be forced upon them arbitrarily. To what degree that actually happened is questionable, since the bureau continued federal paternalism. For the time being, however, it painted a brighter future for Native Americans.[42]

Another factor that sparked Native American patriotism were the Indian residential or boarding schools. More often than not, boarding and residential schools were places of high mortality and suicide rates, physical and mental abuse and poor hygiene; but they also placed an emphasis on patriotism and the American identity throughout their lesson plans.[43] Residential and boarding schools were designed to further Native American assimilation, or as Ward Churchill puts it: 'kill the Indian, save the man'.[44] That the emphasize on patriotism and American identity in the schools further nurtured Native American patriotism is, therefore, no coincidence.

Native American aversion towards Nazi ideology or racial superiority also sparked a more patriotic response towards the war. At that time it was likely that the Axis powers would

[40] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,*72.
[41] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,*72-74.
[42] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 75.
[43] Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man, The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (City Lights Books; San Francisco, 2004); Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race, Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (University of Nebraska Press; Lincoln, 2009); Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 78.
[44] Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man.*

eventually invade if the United States did not halt them. That caused patriotic sentiments amongst Native Americans too. Commissioner John Collier took advantage of those sentiments and told Native Americans that under a Nazi regime, the tribal cultures would most likely be destroyed and Native Americans would be exterminated. Collier illustrated this with a story about the Polish genocide.[45]

Financial enticements were another reason for Native Americans enlistment, as was the case with Leroy Mzhickteno. Mzhickteno was born on October 16, 1918 in Mayetta, Kansas, where he grew up on the Potawatomi Reservation. Mzhickteno went to Grand Prairie Elementary School on the reservation and graduated from high school in Mayetta. After high school he joined the National Guard, to make a few extra dollars a month. When war broke out, Mzhickteno was still serving in the National Guard and stationed at Camp Robinson, near Little Rock, Alabama. He was drinking lemonade in the garden of the two sisters he and his buddy were courting when the girls' father came out and told them about the attack on Pearl Harbor.[46] Back at camp, they were told to stay put and that visitations were no longer allowed. Mzhickteno was sent to San Francisco, California, for guard duty, which he found rather uncomfortable since it was wintertime and quite cold. From there he travelled to Los Angeles he received basic training at Camp Rucker, Alabama, and Camp Butner, North Carolina where he completed his infantrymen's training. Before Mzhickteno went overseas, he was allowed to go home. He left his pocketknife with his dad, because he always admired it. Mzhickteno took some Indian Tobacco with him, to give him courage in Europe, and get him home safe. He kept it in a little pill bottle, throughout his adventures.[47] After his home visit was over, he was sent to New York, from where he disembarked to Europe.

[45] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 62; Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 76; Iverson ed., *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century*, 157.
[46] Mzhickteno, interview, 00:54-06:17.
[47] Mzhickteno, interview, 09:25-13:00.

The steady military salary persuaded numerous Native Americans to enlist, because many reservations were still operating under poor conditions and job opportunities were scarce there, despite efforts from the Office of Indian Affairs.[48] The Indian New Deal of Commissioner Collier from the Office of Indian Affairs had aimed for economic relief and improvement for reservations and Native Americans through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934; but although it accomplished good things, some reservations were not included in the work projects created and only received limited financial support during the 1930s. By the time war broke out, their economic situation had not improved.[49] In addition to that, Indian land had also been unable to provide a foundation for economic sustainability for most tribes, and an extensive portion of that land was overexploited. Many Native Americans did not possess the funds to pay for seeds, fertilizer, tools and farm animals. Native American males who lived on reservations earned just $500 on average, whilst $2,300 was the norm for all other U.S. males.[50]

The impact of the Great Depression played a role in the economic situation of the reservations too; it hit them even harder than in the rest of the United States, and many Native Americans were seriously affected by the 'ten-year depression'.[51] The reservations, therefore, offered no real financial prospects to its residents. During the prewar period many Native Americans found jobs at defense plants to support the production of military related items. Those who did not possess the skills required for work in such plants opted for enlistment in the armed service, because the salary was quite decent, especially for those residing on reservations with poor economic prospects.[52] It was not just the salary that attracted many volunteers, but also the promise that they would receive specialized training that could be

[48] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 6-7.
[49] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 78.
[50] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 13.
[51] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 62.
[52] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 62; Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 78.

deployed in other jobs once they got out of the military.[53] It was a guarantee that they would find jobs more easily because of the specialized training.

Another frequently found motive for voluntary enlistment amongst Native Americans was to gain pride and status within their tribal community. Jeremiah Wolfe's story illustrates this. Wolf was born on September 28, 1924 on the Big Cove Community, near Cherokee, North Carolina.[54] His mother Lucy Ann was a widow and already had three daughters when she met Wolfe's dad Owen. Because they lived so remotely, their children went to boarding schools. The families only means of heat was a fireplace and since they cooked on that too, there was always a need for firewood. In the outdoors, Wolfe learned a lot, like hunting squirrel and how to fish. When Pearl Harbor happened, Wolfe was only in the eighth grade, too young to enlist and fight, but he did notice all the older boys of 18, 19, and 20 in the boarding school who were suddenly gone, and that their dormitory overnight emptied, joining the armed forces in branch they wanted instead of being drafted.[55] Wolfe would admire them in their uniforms when they got back from training because their uniforms looked so neat and shiny. When he turned 18, he too wanted to enlist. Most of the youngsters from his boarding school joined the Marines or the Army but Wolfe was set to join the Navy. On July 21, 1943, Wolfe joined the Navy in Columbia, South Carolina, from where he was transported to the Great Lakes, North of Chicago for basic training. He already learned to march and drill in boarding school, and all the commands that are used in the military. His commander was surprised that he knew and executed it so well, pulled him aside asked if he had been in the service before. Wolfe told him about boarding school and his commander gave him a platoon, and told him to teach them how to drill, how to march. After training Wolfe and his fellow sailors were put on a train and traveled all night long; the next day they passed by Indianapolis, and mountains of West-

[53] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 78.
[54] https://www.theonefeather.com/2018/03/dr-jeremiah-jerry-wolfe-obituary/
[55] Wolfe, interview, 04:20-08:07.

Virginia. The next day they stopped early at a little place on the East Coast, where they unloaded. He was assigned with aiding in transporting troops over the Chesapeake Bay area for a while, after which Wolfe was stationed in Brooklyn, New York. Wolfe boarded the Queen Mary there with final destination Scotland, somewhere around January 1.[56]

Theodore A. Green from New York, William G. Orme from Indiana and John Joseph Ruff from New York all enlisted because of a sense of pride and a desire for status too.[57] Ruff's story is a bit different than the others, because he was initially rejected when he enlisted due to fainting during his physical and given a 4F rating. He tried to get a new test as soon as possible, harassing and calling them until he was given another chance. In retrospect Ruff joked about his aspirations to be an aerial gunner, because 'they had a lifespan of about thirty minutes', so it was not a smart move.[58] Orme enlisted because he 'wanted to be in radar school, which was a hot thing back then', which implies a status symbol.[59]

Back in those days, military service and war was highly respected amongst tribes, and seen as honorable endeavors, 'to capture honor and glory in combat' as had been their tradition for many centuries.[60] Tribal men and women who left or returned from the armed forces received traditional ceremonies, and were bestowed with the honors former warriors used to get. Wolfe's story exemplifies this, admiring the Native American men from his boarding school who enlisted into the armed forces. Only his admiration came not from the honors they received, but rather from how manly the older boys from his boarding school looked in their shiny military uniforms. Franco claims that all these factors 'added status and prestige to his or her tribal standing'.[61] Tribal men and women could, therefore, gain in social status and prestige if they went into the armed services and into battle. According to Townsend, the media and

[56] Wolfe, interview, 08:51-15:00.
[57] Green, interview, 02:05; Orme, interview, 01:01; Ruff, interview, 02:15.
[58] Ruff, interview, 05:43-13:25.
[59] Orme, interview, 01:01.
[60] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 79.
[61] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 63.

government officers emphasized this 'new warrior tradition', by publishing articles of Indian heroism whilst under fire and self-sacrifice whilst serving together with white army men because it implied 'the Indians' own sense of an American identity', and that 'Native Americans were indeed considered part of the white mainstream and consequently ready for their final inclusion with the broader society'.[62] Actually, the renewed warrior spirit benefited Native Americans, 'because it once more instilled pride in the Indian heritage'.[63]

Some Native Americans voluntary enlisted because they were told stories of the poor way draftees got treated during the First World War. As enlistees, they would not have to endure that treatment, so it pressured them into enlisting. The testimony of Glenn Moor, a Yurok Indian, exemplifies that. Moore was born on August 23, 1919, on the Klamath River at a little Indian settlement called Shrey Patch.[64] His people, the Yurok, used the river as a highway for transporting foods by canoes. When Moore grew up, that and walking were the only means of transportation. It was difficult for him to learn English, since the Yurok language was mostly spoken there. Moore was sent to a boarding school in Riverside, California, east of Los Angeles, where he had a hard time dealing with the transit to urban surroundings. Half the day was spent in school and the other half in an auto shop working. His instructor was an Army Air Corps veteran of WWI, which inspired Moore to enlist in the Army Air Corps at March Field, Riverside. Moore chose to enlist because he had heard about the bad way draftees got treated in the WWI, from a colleague at his work in the wood processing industry. Moore remembers one story of a group of draftees who were transported on train to the east coast to get overseas. During that transport the draftees were locked up like cattle, whereas the enlistees were free to move. That story stuck by him and encouraged him to enlist. Moore had three other brothers who served in the armed forces but they served in the Pacific theater of operations whereas he

[62] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 78-80.
[63] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 80.
[64] Moore, interview, 01:21; 38:46.

was sent to Europe. After receiving training at Lowry Field, Moore went to Buckley Field which was just a couple of miles away. He spent two years there as an instructor. He served quite some time in the 4th Air Force, but he was bored with his job as an instructor.[65] Moore went overseas to Europe but he retained his role as instructor there.

Moore enlisted because he thought he would be treated better than when he got drafted. Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman do not mention the maltreatment of draftees in the First World War in their works, and neither does Thomas A. Britten in his book, which is specifically about Native American involvement in the First World War.[66] Whether or not it was hearsay remains unclear because lack of proper sources.

What is confirmed by other sources is that voluntarily enlistment of Native Americans occurred more frequently because then they had a say in what military branch they were deployed, and where they would end up. John R. Milne's testimony exemplifies that, although history is ironic. Milne was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 31, 1924.[67] His father was a graduate from Philadelphia University and worked as a mathematician and an actuary. Milne recalls growing up in a brownstone house on Chestnut Street. Two or three years later his family moved to a Philadelphia suburb called Directional Hill. His family was not affected by the Great Depression that caused many victims; Milne gained a brother and a sister and his dad build an addition to their three-bedroom house. Their family owned three cars, so he always had one at his disposal. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor he was still in his senior year and graduated about six months after, in June 1942. Back in the spring of 1942, Milne and his friends knew they would end up in the military, just not where and when.[68] That summer he worked night shifts which gave him the opportunity to see his girlfriend during the day and in

[65] Moore, interview, 18:30-20:09.
[66] Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I: At War At Home* (New Mexico Press; Albuquerque, 1997).
[67] Milne, interview, 02:00.
[68] Milne, interview, 02:24-07:16.

September he went to Penn State University. When he got off the bus he was immediately recruited for a fraternity, because fraternities lost so many people to the military. Milne saw that the Navy had interesting V7 and V12 programs, which would train him to become an officer and knew he would rather spend his time being an officer in the Navy, then being an enlisted man in the Army. He applied to the deck officers training program. Penn State did not have Navy R.O.T.C, so the idea was he would enlist in the Army Reserve. That way he would have been eligible to the program; if he was accepted he would be in the Navy and they would release him from the Army. Unfortunately, during his examination, it turned out that Milne could not distinguish between green and red and that he was colorblind. That meant he did not get into the Navy's program and remained with the Army's Reserve; in May, 1943 he reported for duty in Fort Meade, Florida. He was there only for a couple of days, then he was transferred to a camp in Texas for infantry basics. There he operated a B.A.R (Browning Automatic Rifle), with which he was proficient. Milne and his fellow recruits were told they were going to North Africa as replacements.[69] Instead he was send to partake in an Army Special Training Program for Engineers in Camp Clayden, Louisiana. Unfortunately, there were too many participants and they had to drop him, and he was sent to become a radio operator in Camp Bowie, Texas. After he was given leave to visit his friends and family at home he was sent to Camp Shanks on the Hudson River, New York. He was shipped out on an Australian cattle ship, which was converted to fit his 160 man company. They were fed well, three times a day Milne says; they only did not have enough hammocks so every night about 15 to 20 men slept on their duffle bags.[70]

Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman do not mention this in their works when they talk about the voluntary enlistment of Native Americans. The testimony

[69] Milne, interview, 10:51-16:00.
[70] Milne, interview, 20:44-28:36.

of Joseph A. Abbondondelo depicts a slightly different story, although it also centers around the likelihood of being drafted. But instead of Milne, Abbondondelo did not enlist because it would gave him a say in where he would wind up. Abbondondelo received a letter from the draft board, providing him with two options. The first was to wait to be drafted and the second was to voluntarily enlist. He chose the first. Abbondondelo enlisted with the Army Air Force in the fall around October, 1942. From their he went to Camp Upton in Yaphank, New York located on Long Island from where he received his basic training, although he received most of it in Atlantic City. From there he went to tactical training school for a couple of months, to learn the systems of all the different aircrafts, near Seymour Johnson Field, North Carolina. He finished gunnery school in Fort Meyers, Florida, and went to Davis Monthan Field, near Tucson, Arizona, to get together with his crew. They then went to Langley Field, Virginia where he spent four months flying a B-24 Liberator. They trained for more than a year, before going overseas in December 1943.[71]

The fear of being the only one that's left out and who does not serve in the military also sparked Native American enlistment. It can be seen as a mix between peer pressure, and a sense of pride. The story of Alaskan Sitka Roy Daniels Bailey, briefly mentioned by Sheffield and Riseman, confirms this.[72] Bailey attended a school mainly for Alaskan Natives. Around 1940-41 the eligible Alaskan workers were already taken into the military, which left a manpower shortage. His dad asked him to go to work with him at the coal storage, and he said yes whilst only fifteen at that time. When the Tribal Labor Law came into force and he was asked if he was sixteen years or older everyone said yes. Because his classmates were two to five years older than him, they soon left to enlist for service after Pearl Harbor in 1941, leaving him as the only boy in his class full of girls. Bailey claims he never felt pressure to enlist but he was not keen on being the only boy in a class full of girls. He was now suddenly one year older, so when

[71] Abbondondelo, interview, 01:42-03:40.
[72] Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 93.

he turned 17 his father send him to Seattle, Washington where the recruitment office was located. When Bailey got there, however, he found out that the Navy was full, so he enlisted in the Army. This was 1944. All military records display his birth year as 1925 instead of 1926, which was only rectified in 1976. Bailey experienced a climate shock when he was sent for 17 weeks of basic training in Camp Roberts, California.[73] He was used to cool temperatures and was suddenly training in temperatures of 90 plus degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius) and above.

John D. Brown, a Native American from Bokhoma, Oklahoma, enlisted because others did so too. Brown enlisted in the Oklahoma National Guard, when he too, was just 15 years old; 'I did that, because it seemed like everyone home was in the National Guard, it was kind of a pastime. Not knowing we would be inducted in the federal service for war'. When the National Guard became the United States Army in September, 1940, Brown transferred to the Army.[74] Brown and Bailey both enlisted because it was the normal thing to do where they grew up. They followed the social structures and did not want to be left out. Bailey and Brown have one more similarity; when they joined the military forces, they both were underage. Underage enlistment was frequent amongst the Native Americans. Richard J. Moon, is yet another example. Moon was born in Chicago, 1927. His father, a Mohican, was a structural steelworker and his mother a housewife. He had two sisters and one brother. His brother was the reason Moon went into WWII, because he was captured in Italy and became a prisoner of war. Moon lied about his age to get into the armed forces. He was only 15 on the day he enlisted, but the draft board believed him when he said he was 18. He was shipped to Camp Robinson, near Little Rock, Arkansas. Moon received his basic infantry training there, after which he was shipped overseas.[75] Because he was much younger than his fellow recruits, Moon had to prove

[73] Bailey, interview, 01:43-06:56.
[74] Brown, interview, 04:30-05:23.
[75] Moon, interview, 02:05-02:54.

he was 18 to fit in with his fellow soldiers, so he started smoking and drinking. His reason for enlisting, 'to free his brother', was an exception, and therefore not mentioned yet in the existing narrative.

One of the more common reasons for enlisting was out of a sense of adventure. The story of Native American William D. Irons, briefly mentioned by Sheffield and Riseman, exemplifies this.[76] When Irons decided to enlist he lived at Fort Yates, North Dakota. His brother served already and was stationed in Australia. Irons said 'it gets kind of boring around the places I was raised out on the prairie'. He tried to get in the Navy but he was colorblind so he went into the Army, just as Milne. He recalls that when he went into the enlistment office, 'there was a big chart on the wall, and on that chart they had different things you could get into. If you went into the Army they would put you where they wanted anyhow. But I seen this parachute down here, a new outfit that just started down at Fort Bennett, and I said I'll take that, and that's what I did'. Fort Bennett was near Columbus, Georgia, so that's where Irons went. 'Basic training was tough', Irons brings to mind, but 'I was young and strong. I was a football and a basketball player. I was in good shape when I went in, so it did not take me long to run the mountain'. Irons remembers his trip to Europe was something he looked forward to.[77] For Irons, military life provided a welcome relief to the monotonous reservation life.

Despite the substantial amount of Native Americans who got accepted into the armed forces, almost one third of those who tried to enlist were rejected.[78] That rejection rate amongst Native Americans was so high because of poor health conditions and literacy problems. The Navajo illiteracy rate was over 80% and more than half only spoke their own language.[79] On sizable reservations, Native American families and tribal communities usually lived in remote areas that were not easy accessible. They lived so remotely, it was nearly impossible to educate

[76] Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 92.
[77] Irons, interview, 01:30-03:00.
[78] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 64.
[79] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 56.

certain Native Americans on health and hygiene issues and some sanitary facilities where located only centrally on the reservation, and therefore difficult for many of them to use. Because malnutrition and the of hygiene, infectious diseases occurred more frequently causing a high mortality rate. All this contributed to the Native American's often poor physical condition, which caused many rejections.[80] The military wanted to tackle the problem of this high rate so the Army Air Force founded a program in Atlantic City, New Jersey, that helped Native Americans with their literacy problems.[81] Although improvements were made, the poor health conditions and literacy problems were structural problems that could not be solved overnight. Despite of these rejections, however, the vast majority of the voluntarily enlistees did get accepted for military service.

The majority of Native American enlistees did so because of patriotism, because of financial enticements, or to gain pride and status increase amongst their tribe. This was the state of the field after Holm, Bernstein, Franco and Townsend's publications. Sheffield and Riseman added two other motives for Native American enlistment; a sense of adventure, and because all their peers did so. The reason behind Moon's enlistment is different and very personal, that it is doubtful that others have enlisted because of it too. This chapter does, however, add two other motives behind the voluntary enlistment to the existing narrative; the poor treatment the World War I draftees endured, and because voluntary enlistment offered advantages that draftees did not receive. It was possible to have a say in what branch of service one would end up, and where. When war was imminent, and the draft seemed inevitable, some people, like Milne preferred enlistment because they wanted a say in the decision-making process.

[80] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 64-65.
[81] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 57-58.

Chapter III: Native American experiences overseas

This chapter examines the Native American experiences overseas during the Second World War; what role did their Indian heritage played and to what extent they experienced racial prejudice or discrimination. Firstly, I argue that Native Americans were subjected to positive discrimination in the Army, but the evidence does not reveal a pattern of racism whilst serving overseas. Secondly, I argue that Native Americans received adequate and just treatment in general in the Armed Forces during the Second World War, but, in order to understand their respective experiences better, it has to be understood that a distinction was made between light and dark skinned Native Americans. Thirdly, I argue in favor of Bernstein, who claims that the Second World War made the Native Americans more prone to assimilation rather than, as Tom Holm argues, encouraging them to adhere to their traditional ways.

The interviews conducted by the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress are incorporated in the larger narrative as portrayed already by Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, Riseman and Sheffield. The latter two had already dipped their toes in the pool of, so far, untouched primary source material in those interviews, yet of the veterans who served in the European and African theaters of operations, they only mention Mzhickteno and Le Beau. There many more valuable interviews that they are not incorporated in the existing narrative so far, and this chapter aims to rectify that absence.

The American government and the military regarded Native American soldiers with admiration and exaggerated their instinctive abilities and other capabilities in vast generalizations. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes stated that 'Indians possessed inherited talents… uniquely valuable in the prosecution of war. These individuals enjoyed an innate endurance and rhythm for combat. They demonstrated a feeling for timing, co-ordination… an uncanny ability to get over any sort of terrain at night, and better than all else, an enthusiasm for fighting. The Indian takes a rough job and makes a game of it. Rigors of combat hold no

terrors for him; severe discipline and hard duties do not deter him'.[82] Major Lee Gilstrap said that 'the Indians love to use that bayonet, and that probably explains why they are the best bayonet fighters. They like the shining steel blade so well that it is a terrific job to make them remember that rifles carry bullets as well as bayonets. In target practice, they are the best rifle shots in their division and most of them are particularly adept at long-range rifle shooting. […] They have an uncanny faculty at weaseling over any kind of terrain at night, and there is a saying that the only Indian who can't find his way back to his own lines is a dead Indian. Physically, their long, sleek muscles are built for endurance. I never saw an Indian who lacked rhythm, timing and coordination'.[83] Even General Major Douglas MacArthur emphasized the Indian warrior tradition. Referring to Native Americans, he asserted that 'many successful methods of modern warfare are based on what he evolved centuries ago.'[84]

There was emphasis on the warrior tradition from the government and military system, but the media played an equally important role, according to Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman. The *American Legion Magazine* published in July 1943: 'The red soldier is tough. Usually he has lived outdoors all his life, and lived by his senses; he is a natural Ranger. He takes to commando fighting with gusto. Why not? His ancestors invented it […] At ambushing, scouting, signaling sniping, they're peerless. Some can smell a snake yards away and hear the faintest movement; all endure thirst and lack of food better than average'.[85] The same article appeared in an issue of *Readers Digest* in July 1943, claiming Native Americans were 'closer to nature than other races and trained since childhood in hunting and reading the natural environment Indian soldiers possessed a peculiar ability to track an enemy without detection', and that 'they proved themselves masters of ambush and signal

[82] As quoted in Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian*, 133.
[83] As quoted in Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 133-134.
[84] As quoted in Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 134.
[85] As quoted in Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 45; 189.

experts'.[86] *The Washington Post, Saturday Review, Common Ground, New York Times, the Saturday Evening Post* and *Asia and the Americas* all published about the warrior tradition too.[87] The Native American warrior tradition was, thus, emphasized and promoted by the media, the government, and the military and influenced how American society perceived Native American involvement in the Second World War.

These characterizations are generalizations of course. But many Native Americans did have outdoor skills that facilitated military service. Theodore A. Green from a Native American from Setalcott tribe confirms America's stereotype of the Native American: he said that bootcamp was easier for him because as a Native American he loved mother earth. 'That's what we trained on, the earth. I could see, in one particular instance when we was put in the woods and trees were all around us. I could put my hand out and feel before I touched it that there was something in front of me. […] They make you go through the water to get your food, you would go through the streams and you would do this and you would do that. For me it was just a blessing.'[88]

For other Native Americans, an upbringing on rural reservations and time spent in boarding schools was definitely an advantage in boot camp and overseas. Glenn Moore and Jeremiah Wolfe from the Veterans History Project grew up on such rural reservations and attended boarding schools.[89] The hierarchical military regime in place there served the Native American youngsters well when they embarked on military life. Wolfe learned to march and drill in boarding school, and all the commands that are used in the military, so he was on familiar ground.[90] Moore went to the Sherman Institute, a boarding school in Riverside, California; he spent half his days in school, and the other half he worked in a garage. Moore learned valuable

[86] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 134.
[87] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 132-133.
[88] Green, interview, 02:26; 04:30.
[89] Moore, interview, 02:40; Wolfe, interview, 06:30;
[90] Wolfe, interview, 10:45.

skills that served him well in the Armed Air Force.[91] This did not mean all Native American enlistees had an easy time adjusting to military life. They had to follow new strict military procedures and guidelines and that was difficult for some recruits.[92]

There was another advantage of Native American involvement in the Second World War according to Commissioner Collier of the Office of Indian Affairs. It was his understanding that there was a better chance of China, Iran, India, Egypt and South Africa becoming allies of the United States when influenced and persuaded by Native Americans, because those countries sympathized with Native Americans on a cultural level. For example, specialists from the Indian Office specifically were called in by Middle Eastern countries when they were in need of engineers to complete railroad and irrigation projects; the population of India had also performed prayers for the Navajo tribe in the 1930s after hearing about the poor conditions there.[93]

Whereas white Americans mostly emphasized the Native American warrior traditions, Native Americans themselves generally attached little importance to their Indian background as having anything to do with their actions. 'Indians should not be considered apart from other Americans', commented one Cherokee pilot in 1943. 'We are just doing our job'.[94]

It was not just white Americans who perceived Native Americans in the light of their warrior tradition, it also affected Axis troops. Hitler even told his eastern division troops that the Soviets fought like Indians, and that their ruthlessness and savagery demanded the full vigor and resolve of German soldiers.[95] That the Germans feared and admired the Native Americans soldiers is made by the story of an American commandant in charge of a large group German

[91] Moore, interview, 02:40-03:10.
[92] Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 118.
[93] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 130.
[94] Quoted in Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II, 54.*
[95] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 136.

prisoners of war. He borrowed Native American soldiers from the nearby 45th Division to strike fear into the prisoners, to make them more compliant and 'governable'.[96]

This is how Native Americans were viewed and characterized by most white U.S. citizens. Although these remarks are wildly racist, they also demonstrate some kind of admiration for the Native Americans. Partly because of that, and partly because of the assimilation policies towards Native Americans they served alongside white American soldiers in all ranks and branches of the military system, in sharp contrast to the African American soldiers. The only reason why Green, an African Native American from the Setalcott tribe had to serve in a segregated black unit was because of the color of his skin. In his Company, Green says, 'you did not get promoted like you wanted to be promoted. We had discrimination this and that, but that was part of army life back in the 1940s'.[97]

Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson publicly spoke out against segregated Indian units and favored it when Native Americans served amongst white soldiers; he felt time spent in the military service would help crumble Native American cultural attachment which would stimulate Native American assimilation in American society. The War Department made it clear that this was not the case for African Americans, who had to fight in segregated units. This made for a complex situation when it came down to dark skinned Native Americans, or African Native Americans. The board drafted dark-skinned Choctaws, for instance, in segregated units, whereas lighter skinned Native Americans 'passed' into white units.[98] Green's story exemplifies this, despite the fact that he enlisted voluntarily, like all Native American veterans in this thesis. Bernstein claims that these incidents emphasized the omnipresence of discrimination against African Americans rather than that the poor treatment of Native

[96] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 136.
[97] Green, interview, 17:28.
[98] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II*, 40-41; Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 67.

Americans in military service. it was mostly southern Native Americans who experienced 'mistaken racial identity'.[99] Bernstein says that dark-skinned Native Americans were put in segregated units because of their African-Americanness rather than their Native Americanness. Native Americans generally fared better than African Americans but discrimination against one group has a negative impact on all groups in a society. Native Americans were still part of the military system that allied groups on a race base rather than a class base. One substantial difference, however, is that the government had wanted Native Americans to assimilate into white society in the preceding decades whereas that was certainly not the case with African Americans. It is therefore difficult to fully agree with Bernstein, although I follow her argument to a certain extent.

Townsend gives several reasons for the different ways in which the Native Americans and African Americans were treated. He states that 'prayer towns in the colonial era, the Lake Mohonk Conference of the 1880s, which culminated with the Dawes Act of 1924, Indian participation in the Great War, the Citizenship Act of 1924 and even the Indian Reorganization Act', all had been a 'concerted effort among whites to incorporate Indians into the general population', […] 'whereas the legacy of slavery, civil war, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow, all tied to an unbridled racism, still embittered white society in 1941 and cast a biracial mentality upon the nation. Racism certainly prevailed against Indians in many communities nationwide, but seldom did it exist with the intensity and depth as that directed toward African Americans'.[100]

Townsend has a valid point, but it must not be forgotten that Indians suffered enormously from the Removal Act of 1830, so the objective of the American government regarding Native Americans was not always one of assimilation and could even be described

[99] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 42.
[100] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian*, 140.

as genocidal. Furthermore, the general view of the Indian-white wars throughout the history of the United States was that the Native Americans simply tried to protect their lands and families; in regard to the Second World War, this was something that most could relate to. The industrial revolution and following modernization proved useful too, since it made white Americans place those Indian-white conflicts in a 'more primitive, and therefore a more mentally remote area'.[101]

The civil war and the slavery issue proved to be not so easily forgotten as the white-Indian wars, 'since the horrors of the Civil War still marred the emotional landscape of whites and blacks. That war shattered the nation like no Indian issue ever did', according to Townsend.[102] Townsend gives another important factor that has to be taken in consideration regarding Native American-white relations. In contrast to African Americans, the Native American population had decreased until the 1900s, and Native Americans mostly resided on remote Reservations, so white Americans were less often confronted with the issue of Indian segregation. Furthermore, and also in contrast with African Americans, Native American were not so numerous that they threatened white dominance in the American society.[103]

Some Native Americans claim they did experience some kind of racism or discrimination in the Armed Forces. Roy Daniel Bailey, a Sitka Native from Alaska who served with the 71st Infantry Division in France and Germany, says everyone assumed him to be an Inuit ('Eskimo'), from the draft board throughout his whole military career. They assumed that simply because he was from Alaska, which he found amusing. He was never to bothered that people mistook him for an Eskimo rather than a Sitka Native. Bailey was shot by a German machine gun in Europe, but since there was no report of the action, he had to prove he was a war casualty with the help of witnesses, which he could not. Recently, he was fully recognized for his war efforts during the Second World War, which he reluctantly accepted. Bailey's wife

[101] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 139.
[102] Townsend*, World War II and the American Indian*, 139.
[103] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 139.

said ‘he realized that there were a lot of American Indians, Native Americans, that had suffered the same kind of things that he had suffered, so he thought it might be good to get some hope out there to people, that once in a great while justice can be done’.[104] Bailey was convinced that his Sitka heritage played a role in his treatment during and after the Second World War by the military. However, it is difficult to attribute this to racism, simply because he speaks so little about it, and secondly, because all this was caused by lack of a combat report, there is not much known about what happened precisely. It could have been racism, but it could just as easily have been an unfortunate misunderstanding.

Most Native American veterans of the Veterans History Project have not spoken out whether they experienced racism or not. The few that have spoken about racism or discrimination say that they were not affected by it. Glenn Moore, a Yurok Indian who served as an instructor specialized in the P38 armor with the 9th Air Force in England, France and Germany, says he was treated well as a Native American in the army, and that he felt like he was treated as an equal. It was only when he came back to the United States, that he experienced discrimination when he was refused service in a bar he visited with some friends.[105] Albert R. Mora, an Apache from New Mexico, who operated a tank in General Patton’s 3rd Army, does not talk about racism explicitly. When asked how the transition from a little town to the military life went, Mora responded: ‘I met so many guys, good friends. I liked it, I did like that. A lot of guys were so nice to me you know’.[106]

Serving in the U.S military service was not only reserved for Native American males, women also actively partook in the endeavor. Sheffield and Riseman claim that over 800 Native American women enlisted; some served as reservists for the Marine Corps as was the case with Minnie Spotted Wolf, Celia Mix and Viola Eastman. Others like Marcella Ryan Le Beau served

[104] Bailey interview, 12:25; 01:05:40.
[105] Moore, interview, 30:47.
[106] Mora, interview, 13:47.

in hospitals. Ola Mildred Rexroat, an Oglala Sioux woman, served with the Women Airforce Service Pilots near the Mexican border.[107] Le Beau, as already portrayed in the book of Sheffield and Riseman, says that she also did not experience any racism while in serving overseas in hospitals in Paris and Liege. Her colleagues assumed that because her great-grandfather was a chief, that she was a princess.[108]

Of all the Native Americans that took part in the Veterans History Project, only Green and Bailey mentioned they suffered from discrimination. Although one has to be careful, this can be interpreted as meaning that racism did not affect Native Americans greatly overseas. If it had a larger impact on the Native American veterans, one would expect that more of them would have talked about it in their interviews. What also plays into the lack of experienced racism overseas is that some Native Americans could pass for whites, because they were only half or quarter Indian. It is also important to take into consideration that the full military service of Native Americans in the Second World War will never be complete since Indians often classed as 'white' inductees, and many never made their Indian identity a matter of record.[109]

During their time overseas many Native American soldiers were called 'Chief', or 'Geronimo' after the Apache war hero, by their white American colleagues. Bernstein is the first to argue that the word 'chief' proved and illustrated the respect white Americans held for Native American soldiers rather than that it showed racial connotations. It was different and had nothing to do with the 'sambo mentality'. Townsend agrees with Bernstein. The term 'chief' would now be viewed as racial slur, but during the Second World War it signaled respect, strength, courage, and most often indicated friendship and acceptance. Most importantly, the majority of Native Americans themselves did not perceive it as a term of racial

[107] Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War,* 102-105.
[108] Le Beau, interview, 15:24.
[109] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 150.

slur, although some Indians would have preferred to be called by their own name.[110] Franco, however, described the story of Native American Sergeant Green; Vidal Franco, one of the soldiers serving under Green stated that 'we never called him that […] because we wanted to respect him'.[111] Sheffield and Riseman point out that the most famous Native American Ira Hayes did not perceive it that way either; it angered him.[112]

Yet, none of the veterans from the Veterans History Project talk about being called 'Chief', or 'Geronimo', except for Geronimo Fragua, but that was just his first name. It does not prove anything, however, that they do not mention the term 'Chief' or 'Geronimo' does not mean that it did not occur. It does, however, indicate that Bernstein and Townsend are right when they claim the majority of the Native Americans were not to bothered with it. William William D. Irons served with the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment that had the nickname 'Geronimo' in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany. The regiment was named after private Eberhardt, who shouted: 'Geronimo!', before making his first mass jump out of an airplane. The night before his jump a western played at the movies. It was about cavalry troops fighting and chasing Geronimo, a famous Apache chief. After the movie Eberhardt and his fellow soldiers went to a beer garden where they discussed next day's first jump, and how risky it would be. Eberhardt came up with the idea of yelling 'Geronimo!' to prove that the mass jump did not frighten him.[113]

The military acknowledged the 'exceptional' capabilities of Native Americans. That acknowledgement made them more likely to be recruited for special assignments; as was the case with 13 Southwestern Indians who were ordered to destroy the batteries the Germans had

[110] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II*, 55-56; Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 140.
[111] Franco, Crossing the Pond, 134.
[112] Sheffield and Riseman, *Indigenous People and the Second World War,* 122.
[113] Irons, interview, 31:00; Kathleen Havener, 'Geronimo!'-Or How I Became a Sole Practitioner', *Litigation* Vol. 36, No. 1 (2009) 22; Gerard M. Devlin, *Paratrooper!: The Saga Of US Army and Marine Parachute And Glider Combat Troops During World War II* (St. Martins Press; New York, 1979) 68-70.

along the Normandy cliffs. Townsend says that their selection to the team rested merely on stereotypical assumptions of the Native Americans 'rock climbing skills, sense of balance, and the courage that emanated from a traditional warrior spirit'.[114] This, of course, is a strong case of positive discrimination. One can definitely argue that these stereotypical assumptions that Townsend talked about were founded on racial and cultural prejudices; it is also a vast generalization and not all Native Americans were natural warriors. They were, however, forced to live up the expectations and abilities white Americans credited them with. An article in *The Indian's Friend,* the organ of the former National Indian Association, stated that 'Indians in the regiments are being used for scouting and patrol duty because of the natural instinct which fits them for this kind of work'.[115]

This stereotype thus endangered Native Americans lives by forcing them 'into precarious assignments'.[116] Native Americans serving over in the Pacific theater of operations experienced another risk when sent on reconnaissance missions behind Japanese lines; they often were mistaken for Japanese soldiers when they tried to re-enter the American marine camps.[117] Roy Daniel Bailey, Sibby Lebeau and Edward Gillespie-Collins all served on reconnaissance missions in Northern Africa and Europe. Lebeau served with the Scouts and Raiders, Reconnaissance, in the 11th Naval Combat Demolition Unit and was a Code Talker too. 'We would go in and take the sounding, the depths over there and what the tides were, and there in Normandy, I and my commanding officer even snuck in and took some buckets of sand so that the Army could test it and see how heavy a vehicle could go on it, see, but we would take that and then we'd code talk it back to the ship or wherever this code talker was, see. You know, the other one that was receiving me, so I'd give him all the soundings, and the different

[114] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 136.
[115] Quoted in Holm, 'Fighting the White Man's War', 153.
[116] Holm, 'Fighting the White Man's War, 153.
[117] Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian,* 147.

tides.'[118] Gillespie-Collins who served with the 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division in Northern Africa, Italy and France, was sent on night patrols behind the lines; his mission was to harass the enemy, go get a prisoner or cut communications, and to find out where the enemy got their strongpoints, their machinegun and mortar placements. Gillespie-Collins remembers that a good sense of direction was necessary otherwise you would get lost.[119] Bailey's unit was sent ahead of the army in no-man's land, to scout for enemy troops.[120]

The analyzed interviews from the Veterans History Project confirm what Bernstein, Franco and Townsend have all argued, namely that Native Americans served within the various military branches in various positions and ranks.[121] These veterans fought with Infantry Divisions, Armored Infantry Divisions, flew heavy bombers and fighter aircrafts like the P47, operated from within tanks like the M3, served with a Parachute Regiment, with Naval Bomb Disposal Units, on ships, with Ordnance and Communication Units, with Naval Demolition Units, and in hospitals.[122]

Especially Native Americans in the Air Corps inspired white Americans. Because of the confined structure of combat, it was easier to confirm and depict personal accounts of bravery. Bernstein points out that 'the lengths to which whites went to indicate Indian heroism under fire suggest that the Indian was stereotyped and eulogized beyond normally exaggerated wartime accounts'.[123] The majority of Native American soldiers served with the 45th Infantry Division, however. This division endured 511 days of combat; the division first fought in North-Africa, then made the trip overseas to Sicily, and went from Naples down through the Italian

[118] Lebeau, interview transcript.
[119] Gillespie-Collins, interview, 23:42-25:00.
[120] Bailey, interview, 31:00.
[121] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 54; Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 137 and 155; Townsend, *World War II and the American Indian*, 150.
[122] Abbondondelo, interview; Bailey, interview; Brown, interview, Cooper, interview, Derore, interview; Green, interview; Gillespie-Collins, interview; Fragua, interview; Irons, interview; Le Beau, interview; Lebeau interview; Lindley, interview; Milne, interview; Moon, interview; Moore, interview; Mora, interview; Mzhickteno, interview; Orme, interview; Rosman, interview; Ruff, interview; Spiegelhalter, interview; Wilson, interview; Wolfe, interview.
[123] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II, 54.*

Peninsula. In January 1944 the 45th Division was involved in the landing on Anzio, from where they moved up to Rome. From Rome they went to southern France, from where they went through France to finally arrive in the Ardennes in the spring of 1945.[124] This unit contained 1,500 Indians from twenty-eight tribes according to Franco, but Townsend says the division included over 2,000 Native Americans.[125] There is evidence, according to Franco and Townsend that Native Americans of this division performed war dances prior to the invasion of Sicily, but instead of carrying a tomahawk, they carried a M1 Garand.[126]

There are veterans, from the Veterans History Project, who talk about other Indian traditions or traditional spiritual rituals they performed, besides the war dances that Franco and Townsend mention. Sheffield and Riseman briefly mention Leroy Mzhickteno, who served with the 35th Infantry Division in France, Belgium and Germany and carried Indian tobacco from home with him for safekeeping.[127] They fail to mention Donald H. Lindley, a Native American of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, who served in North Africa, Normandy, Belgium and Germany with General Patton. When the fighting got tough, Lindley read a prayer from Chief Crazy Horse he carried with him. Lindley was first assigned to serve in a tank, but he 'did not want to fight in the belly of an iron horse as a Native American so I joined the Armored Infantrymen.' [128] His refusal to serve 'in the belly of an iron horse', plays into the stereotype of Native American and their abilities in nature when given the opportunity to move freely.

It is important to note that not all Native American soldiers who went overseas worshipped Native American religion; Bailey, for instance, was a Presbyterian before he went

[124] Bernstein, American Indians and World War II, 54.
[125] Franco, Crossing the Pond, 131-132.
[126] Franco, Crossing the Pond, 131-132; Townsend, World War II and the American Indian, 133.
[127] Scott R. Sheffield and Noah J. Riseman, Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War : The Politics, Experiences and Legacies of War in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Cambridge University Press; Cambridge, 2019) 130; Mzhickteno, interview, 13:00.
[128] Lindley, interview, 10:32-24:56.

over to Europe.[129] From Brown's testimony it becomes clear that Brown was no Christian, but that he did attribute higher powers to the Christian God rather than to his own native prayers. 'I had some near misses', Brown says, 'I wasn't a Christian, but a I guess the good lord watched over me, because this is supposed to be a Christian nation. It wasn't my prayers that saved me, I think it was the prayers said on my behalf. Because I don't think God would hear a non-Christian prayer. He might hear it, to no avail. I feel like that if you are a Christian now, I think he would answer your prayers, because you're one of his children'.[130] Some Native Americans spent their youth in boarding schools, and were familiarized with the Christian faith.[131] Since Bailey attended boarding school in Alaska it could be that he learned it there; there is no mention in his testimony of his parents being Presbyterians.

Native Americans who mostly lived on remote reservations served amongst white Americans in the military service where they got acquainted with 'white' customs. Reports from the field attested 'tremendous interest in the Christian devotions of both Catholics and Protestants'.[132] Many Native Americans converted overseas. Bernstein points out that it were the 'life-and-death circumstances and the example of whites attending services', that 'made Indian soldiers more receptive to non-Indian religious observance'.[133] The testimony of Mora is an example of that. Mora said he wanted to learn about 'that big book', and asked his sergeant: 'maybe you have one for me?' Mora's sergeant responded: 'I think I know what you are talking about'. Mora continues: 'so then he started to tell me many things that I never heard before'.[134] Did this indicate that the hopes of Secretary of War Stimson became a reality? Was serving

[129] Bailey, interview,
[130] Brown, interview, 51:11.
[131] Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man* (City Lights Books; San Francisco, 2004) 27.
[132] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 58.
[133] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II,* 59.
[134] Mora, interview, 15:50.

amongst white Americans in the Second World War the factor that made Native Americans assimilate into white American society?

Franco states that there are two perspectives on the influence of the Second World War on Native Americans and their tribal heritage. The first one is the traditionalist perspective; instead of assimilation into white American society, Tom Holm argues that the Second World War instilled more pride with Native Americans, on their tribal heritage.[135] Kiowa veterans, for instance, were able to resurrect the Tia Piah Gourd Dance society; before the Second World War there were only few Kiowas allowed to partake in the societies ceremonies. Holm states that this meant that 'a ceremonial obligation to the cultural viability of the Tribe could be retained, and with the Kiowa ideals of order and social continuity would be carried forward'.[136] World War II thus allowed young Indian men to revive those societies and partake in the traditional ceremonies, that had been dying out before World War II.[137] Bernstein has a different view, and emphasizes the assimilationist character more. She bases her claim on three arguments; the first is that, because Native Americans and white Americans served together, Native Americans adopted white customs. The example of Native Americans overseas who converted to Christianity illustrates her point. Secondly, Bernstein argues that life in military service forced Indians to follow bureaucratic structures that reinforced socialization to white society; Indian marriages were not conducted in front of a clergymen, and therefore not valid proof of marriage which meant their wives could not claim dependency allotments. Because of that, many Native Americans remarried before clergymen.[138] As a third argument, Bernstein points out that many Native Americans finally experienced the life beyond the reservation; several Navajo remained in Japan and Australia after the war, where they married non-Indian

[135] Franco, *Crossing the Pond,* 121.
[136] Holm, Fighting a White Man's War, 160.
[137] Holm, Fighting a White Man's War, 159.
[138] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II, 59.*

wives. There are also examples of Native American veterans who brought their non-Indian wife back with them to the United States, and chose cities over reservations to live in.[139] On the one hand, the Second World War thus reinforced traditional Indian ceremonies and tribal ties, and on the other hand it paved the way for assimilation. The testimony of Jeremiah Wolfe, an Cherokee from North Carolina who served in the Navy on the USS LCT 616 in France during the Second World War, puts more emphasis on the latter. Wolfe says that 'traditions were about forgotten because the disturbance of the world war. We did not go back to a lot of our old traditions because we learned new methods, new ways of life and forgot our traditions a great deal. We do some, but if it had not been for the war we would be probably all Cherokee today'.[140]

The Native American cultural heritage and the stereotyping that followed played an important role in the Native American involvement in the World War II. Partly because of their 'warrior tradition' they were given a warm welcome by white Americans in the military service; yet the stereotyping was not entirely beneficial to Native Americans, because it lead to them being placed in dangerous situations as reconnaissance units because of their Native heritage. The warrior tradition was not the only factor that made Native Americans welcome in the armed forces; the Indian wars were deemed a distant past, and the Indian was just seen as defending his home and family, and from the 1880s onwards there had been an active assimilation policy in place towards the Native Americans. The fact that most Native Americans still lived on remote reservations and posed no threat to dominant white American society also helped. Not all Native Americans were welcomed to serve in desegregated units; dark skinned Choctaw and Cherokee had to serve in segregated units, with African American soldiers. However, light skinned Native Americans could pass for white more easily in the military than in normal life.

[139] Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II, 60.*
[140] Wolfe, interview, 35:30.

It was not just Native American men who enlisted, Native American women also saw combat in different roles with various branches. Not all Native Americans could live up to the expectations the stereotype demanded of them, and Native Americans who attended residential or boarding schools were prepared better for military life through the hierarchical military regime in place there. The Second World War instilled more pride within the Native American communities, and it sometimes helped revive old ceremonial traditions. On the other hand, Native Americans serving alongside white Americans meant some white customs were picked up, and Native Americans were familiarized with the white American bureaucratic system. Native Americans also moved to cities more than before the Second World War. In conclusion, however, one can argue that Secretary of War Stimson eventually was right when he said that white and Native American soldiers serving together would stimulate Native American assimilation in American society, as the testimony of Wolfe illustrates, although some traditions were revived.

Conclusion:

Navajo Code Talkers in the Pacific received the most attention, but Comanche and Sioux Code Talker units were involved in the Second World War as well. Not all publications on Native American involvement in the Second World War are secondary literature, there are various memoirs of Native American veterans available as well. Most testimonies from Native American veterans of the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress match the existing narrative as composed by Holm, Bernstein, Franco, Townsend, and Sheffield and Riseman regarding motives behind voluntary enlistment in the U.S. military. This thesis adds two more; essentially they both boil down to enlistees having more perks than draftees. The first one is because of rumors that enlistees got treated better than draftees during World War I and the fear that would re-occur in the Second World War. Secondly some preferred enlisting over being drafted because enlisting entitled them some say in where they would serve and in what kind of unit. Most Native Americans claim they did not experience any racism or discrimination but they still served in a system that allied groups based on race rather class. This thesis argues that many Native Americans suffered from positive discrimination, an indirect result of their warrior tradition. Furthermore, this thesis argues that although the Second World War revived some Native American rituals and traditions as was the case with the Kiowa's, it spurred the process of Native American assimilation into mainstream U.S. society.

If we truly want to achieve a comprehensive understanding regarding the involvement of Native Americans in the Second World War, we must make sure that all available sources are incorporated in the existing narrative. The incorporation of the oral history interviews from the Veterans History Project in this thesis is a small step into that direction. There are, however, many more untouched oral history interviews available of Native Americans that got drafted and served in Europe and Africa, and of Native American enlistees and draftees that served

over in the Pacific theater of operations. Hopefully they will be integrated in the existing narrative someday.

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