

Provincetown: A Summer's View

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Introduction:

This study was conducted for a six week period during the months of July and August, 1976, in Provincetown, Massachusetts, as an independent research project undertaken in the form of ethnographic fieldwork for credit towards a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology at Illinois State University. My sojourn in Provincetown resulted from an invitation by Dr. M. Estellie Smith, Professor of Anthropology at State University of New York, Oswego, to work with her as a field assistant gathering pertinent ethnographic data on Portuguese communities in New England, while enjoying the benefits of her guidance and tutelage in the acquisition of the proper knowledge and skills for fieldwork. Also known as the "first landing of the Pilgrims", Provincetown is situated on the northernmost tip of Cape Cod, figuring today as a major tourist spot in New England. It is also home to a considerable contingent of descendants of Portuguese immigrants who came as whalers and fishermen. Dr. Smith's research focused on the Provincetown Fishing Cooperative and the local fishermen, although Provincetown's population of Portuguese ancestry was also one of her concerns. Another field assistant, Onno Husing, was engaged in participant-observation as a non-remunerated fisherman trainee on a local fishing boat. As for me, I was given complete freedom to investigate any area of particular interest.

Although I had no predetermined problem-orientation, at Dr. Smith's suggestion I had planned on concentrating on the population of Portuguese ancestry. Indeed, this became the primary focus of my study, and additional data was gathered in two different trips to Fall River and New Bedford, two towns in Massachusetts with large concentration of Portuguese immigrants. Nevertheless, the fascinating complexity of the population make-up of Provincetown and the various interacting sub-cultures on the town induced me to study it as a whole. Given my short stay in the community, however, I was only able to touch lightly on all the different aspects of life in Provincetown. Furthermore, people I talked to indicated that the Provincetown of the winter months is radically different from the one I knew in the summer. The observations presented in these report, therefore, only apply to the summer months. Data concerning the 'off-season' is strictly based on interpretations of the people interviewed.

Our work in Provincetown was facilitated by the fact that Dr. Smith's maternal ancestors were Portuguese originally from Fayal, Azores, who had settled in Provincetown over 60 years ago. Her mother was raised in the community and a few relatives still lived in town; in fact, we rented the upstairs of her cousin's house. The proximity of our quarters to those of Dr. Smith's cousin's family fostered several informal daily visits in both directions. The close relationship with our landlords, and the fact that they, our landlords, were natives of Provincetown was very helpful to our

work. First, it allowed us to gain a good insight into family life in Provincetown. Secondly, through informal conversations with them we were able to ascertain the accuracy of our data. Furthermore, they introduced us to potential informants in a friendly, informal manner. In addition, the fact that I am a Brazilian of Portuguese ancestry also helped assure a good reception into the community. In particular, being a native Portuguese speaker was particularly helpful in Fall River and New Bedford where many immigrants still speak little (if any) English - even though it was not always easy to understand one another, as the Portuguese spoken in Brazil is quite different in terms of particular accents as well as the meaning of some words and expressions to that spoken in the communities visited. Nevertheless, that I spoke Portuguese, along with the fact that Dr. Smith had previously worked in all these communities, and had already established several contacts and made friends among the people, rendered our work much easier. Indeed, our 'field conditions', for the most part, were excellent!

In Provincetown, large parts of the information we collected came through formal and informal interviews and library research, however, participant-observation in communal affairs was the preferred research technique used. Simply by wandering around town and going into bars, restaurants, shops or just to the beach provided opportunities for systematic observations and learning about the community. Visits to the History Museum, the Catholic Church, the Public Library, the meetings at Town Hall, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) chapter, the Community Center, the Fishing Cooperative, the Town Wharf, and even to the local Laundromat, among other places, also proved to be a significant means for gathering data. But, undoubtedly, the highlight of my field experience was an eighteen-hour trip on a commercial fishing boat, although observations made on the trip are very fuzzy due to a severe case of seasickness which rendered this ethnographer totally unable to stand on her feet for more than a few minutes at a time. In spite of this shortcoming, this trip was documented with several pictures.

I found that, in Provincetown, one of the best ways to meet new people was to go to the beach. Due to the informality of the setting, one could approach and be approached by strangers without formal introductions. Similarly, at the local bars and restaurants, most people would talk with those at neighboring tables whether they were strangers or not. Besides, waiters and waitresses as well as shopkeepers could also be easily approached and engaged in informal conversation about the town. Many informants were also contacted via other informants, resulting in the development of an extensive network. Formal interviews were usually set up by appointment, and whenever permitted, they were tape-recorded, and later transcribed. Field notes were compiled as often as possible, and Dr. Smith read all this material and made corrections and suggestions. I recorded approximately 130 pages of field notes, and copies of Dr. Smith's and Onno Husing's notes have also been placed at my disposal. We also gathered important information from articles and ads in *The Provincetown Advocate*, the local news paper, and became friends with the paper's Director, of Portuguese extraction himself, who was one of the persons interviewed for this report.

I have been invited by Dr. Smith to return to Provincetown to continue field research. My plans for future work include a close investigation of marriage and baptismal records of St. Peter the Apostle Church, the parish of most part of the Portuguese community in town, and data collecting in the archives of the local paper. Of course,

there are several issues I discuss in this paper in need of further investigation, but the preliminary ‘mini-ethnography’ here contained, encapsulating bibliographical as well as the results of my investigation this past summer, should work as a guideline for future research.

Provincetown in History:

To this neophyte ethnographer with romantic ideas of doing fieldwork in a quaint Portuguese fishing village in America, Provincetown was quite a surprise. Although I had been forewarned that the town ‘bubbled’ with tourists in the summertime, and, as such, was far from imagining it would be a quiet, peaceful resort, I must confess that the idea of ‘Portuguese fishermen’ had made me equate Provincetown with Cascais, a fishing village in Portugal. Someone had once sent me a postcard from Cascais that depicted a scene of weary fishermen pulling their boats and nets from the sea at sunset. I was so taken by this personal imagery, that upon arriving in Provincetown in the late afternoon, I immediately walked towards the beach in search of the fishermen with their boats and their nets!

Perhaps, if I had come to Provincetown sixty or seventy years earlier I might have observed that postcard scene. However, not even at that time was Provincetown strictly a fishing village as I had romanticized. The history of the town dates from over three centuries ago, and although fishing has played a continuing role in this history, it has for long become gradually de-emphasized in the town’s economy - but not in the resident’s imagery. This is not surprising when one thinks of Provincetown’s geographic location. Strategically set right at the tip of Cape Cod and protruding into the North Atlantic, Provincetown is surrounded by water on three sides. She offers easy access to George’s Banks and to the Grand Banks which for centuries have been historical fishing grounds. In point of fact, some say that Provincetown was probably visited by early Portuguese whalers and fishermen long before she was settled, and even earlier still, by the Vikings (Digges, 1937). Nevertheless, the first official visitors were the Pilgrims. On the 21st day of November of the year 1620, the Mayflower anchored in Provincetown Harbor and remained there for five weeks before sailing on to Plymouth, but only after signing the Mayflower Compact. The Pilgrim Monument, a 252-ft tower built between 1907 and 1910 to celebrate their first landing of the Mayflower, is a major tourist attraction to the Cape.

The town was later settled by English fishermen who, during the 17th and 18th centuries, came to the outer Cape in search of mackerel and cod. In 1727, this fishing settlement was incorporated as Provincetown. Ten years later the town already figured as an important whaling port, marking the advent of the Golden Era of whaling in New England (Sanderson, 1956). During the next 150 years, the town prospered: whaling, Banks-fishing, and related industries attracted settlers in growing numbers such that, by 1800, the total population had reached nearly 1000 habitants (The Provincetown Chamber of Commerce, 1976).

Making their way across the Atlantic as crew hands in whaling and fishing vessels, large number of Portuguese from the Azores, Cape Verde, and Madeira Islands, as well from the Algarve and mainland Portugal settled in Provincetown. Their number increased sharply from the 1860s until the 1920s, when the Exclusion Act put severe restrictions on immigration to the United States. By then, however, the Portuguese had

already established themselves in the community. It was common for them to have large families, and soon the Silvas, the Santos, and the Salvadors made their presence felt in the life of the town. Although originally the sea was their economic lifeblood, the Portuguese eventually diversified and entered other economic areas. When they did, they faced growing hostility on the part of the rest of the community, largely due to the economic problems that affected the town as a whole.

By the 1860s, when the Portuguese began to arrive in larger numbers, New England whaling was experiencing the beginnings of a downfall. Demands for whale oil decreased as the discovery of petroleum introduced a relatively cheaper replacement. Furthermore, the Civil War put severe restrictions on whaling and fishing. But the whale population was already becoming depleted in the North Atlantic, requiring longer voyages eventually as far away as the Pacific Ocean, which shifted the focus of whaling to the West Coast ports. Even if Provincetown's last whaler, the 'Charles W. Morgan', made its final voyage in 1921, all the whaling related industries had already been deactivated by the late 19th century.

Banks-fishing persisted throughout the whaling era; to this day, a few Provincetown boats still go on days long trips to the Banks. But fishing has diminished both in quantity and importance. While in the late 1800s Provincetown had a fleet of over 100 boats and nearly 60 wharves in the harbor, today there are only 30 boats, anchoring in only one wharf: the MacMillan Wharf. This is all that remains of the days when Provincetown was indeed

“...the pre-eminent Grand Banks port. There were buildings for smoking and canning herring, and fish-flaking racks for curing codfish which were supplied with salt by 70 salt works – windmills along the waterfront pumped sea water into vats to be evaporated by the sun” (The Provincetown Chamber of Commerce, 1976:13-14).

Progress in terms of refrigeration and transport, combined with the gradual depletion of the schools of fish in the area, were major factors in the decline of fishing and related activities. Refrigeration and fast transportation of the catch by truck obviated the necessity for local preservation of the catch. This, in turn, de-emphasized the need for salt manufacturing. Simultaneously, it became more and more costly to purchase and operate a fishing boat; particularly after legislation was enacted in relation to insurance and safety instruments requirements.

As fishing gradually became less and less important, tourism started to replace it as the town's economic base. In the early 1900s, visitors began to discover Provincetown as a resort. The town resembled European fishing villages in natural surroundings and ethnic component, which attracted people from the world of arts. During the 1920s and 1930s, the town became known as an art colony. Painters, sculptors, writers, poets, play-writers and people of the theater gathered in Provincetown; art schools and galleries were created and the Provincetown Playhouse founded. Eugene O'Neill, among other celebrities, made his home on the East side of town, and his first play was enacted by the Provincetown Players. In the 1970s, however, no longer does one see large numbers of young artists with brushes and easel around town as it was common some decades back. Of course, vestiges of the former art colony still remain, but Provincetown artistic endeavors at present are primarily geared towards the tourist market.

Indeed, tourism is now the pumping valve of the town's economy. All the town's resources have been converted to catering to tourism. Provincetown's historical visitors – the Pilgrims, the fishing fleet, and the arts people – have all been successfully employed as attraction: tourists flock to Provincetown in the summertime. Among them come singers and performers, students seeking summer jobs, and long-time summer residents and their families. A boat comes from Boston every morning bringing 'day-trippers', who come to shop in the numerous arts and crafts establishments along Commercial Street (the main 'drag'), or visit the Pilgrim Monument. In addition, Provincetown's several beaches and amenable summer climate naturally attract summer visitors. However, what attracts most people to her shores is her unquestionable unique 'ambiance.' Provincetown is a blend of fishing village, art colony, literary center, and summer resort, interspersed with Old New England historical charm, Portuguese ethnic aura, and the fun provided at various renowned hotels, restaurants and show-houses catering to a growing population of gays.

The Social Make-Up:

Provincetown is a 5 miles long and 2 miles wide strip which, in the summertime, is home to several different social segments and, not rarely, to conflicting groups. As different segments arrived in Provincetown, previously existing ones have assumed the role of 'charter members', actively defending their boundaries. In general, the new arrivals could only occupy the 'lesser' areas, unless, of course, they constituted a wealthier group and could purchase the choicest areas available. Competition for the town's territory and resources resulted in the spatial distribution of different sectors of the population within specific boundaries.

Some of the earliest visitors were aboriginal peoples belonging to the Wampanoag Federation who, much like today's tourists, used Provincetown as a summer camp. Yet, they never settled around permanently, and were eventually 'displaced' with the arrival of European settlers. There are a few families who claim descent from these early English settlers still living in Provincetown. Most of them live on the east and extreme west side of town, in areas considered 'top choice'. They are considered to be Provincetown's elite and are involved in the Heritage Museum and in preserving the town as "Old New England". They were influential in having the Pilgrim Monument built, in the placement of a bronze plaque in the spot where the Pilgrims first landed, and for the bas-relief located behind Town Hall, depicting the signing of the Mayflower Compact. The presence of these Old New England families in Provincetown is noted and appreciated, but their economic holdings in town are not easily identified, nor do they take an active part – at least, not openly – in the town's political life, with the exception of a member of the Board of Selectmen, who is known as an "old Yankee" family representative.

Undoubtedly, the descendants of the Portuguese fishermen form the largest local resident group, representing approximately 75% of the year-around population. They are still involved in fishing, but many own restaurants, shops, hotels, the local car dealerships and several other businesses. They are also involved in town government and exert ostensive control of the local political life. The great majority belong to St. Peter the Apostle Church which they helped to build; it has always played a significant role in the life of the population of Portuguese ancestry in the community. Many of

them also frequent the local VFW Chapter, where Bingo is played on weekends. They are also regulars in local bars and restaurants – in general, those that stay open year-round and do not especially cater to the tourists. Prices for meals and drinks climb during the tourist season, thus, the Portuguese contingent, like most of the local population, are not often seen dining out during the summer. At certain establishments, they pay according to the off-season menu prices, even at the height of the summer. In any event, it pays to observe that this is also the season that all of those still able are working intensively and saving for the slow months.

Most of the traditional Portuguese customs have ceased to be observed, however, the local population of Portuguese ancestry still have a strong sense of ethnic identity. They are proud of their heritage and maintain a local chapter of the Portuguese-American League. Even at such, they are not readily observable as a separate ethnic group as in other Portuguese communities in New England, such as New Bedford and Fall River. Most of the Provincetown Portuguese are second or third generation Americans, and only few still speak the mother –tongue; it is difficult to distinguish them from the rest of the population. In Provincetown, one is considered to be a Portuguese by descent, even if only one of the person’s grandparents was of Portuguese ancestry. Personally, I was only able to identify who was Portuguese by the person’s family name. To be sure, a few of them do have a typical Mediterranean phenotype, but there has been intermarriage between the Portuguese and other segments of the town’s population local (and from other localities), making it difficult to ascertain one’s ethnic group simply by their looks.

Written accounts of the Portuguese in Provincetown in the earlier part of the 20th century (Edwards 1918, Digges 1937) depict them as maintaining strong territorial and social boundaries, observing old customs in dress, diet, language, and so forth. As noted, the Exclusion Act seriously curtailed the arrival of ‘fresh loads’ of Portuguese on a regular basis, providing continuous ethnic revitalization and the preservation of all customs and traditions. Gradually, the old ways were discarded for new ones, and few (if any) of the traditions have carried out over the decades. The annual Blessing of the Fleet, originally observed as the feast day of St. Peter’s, is among these few, but, at present, it is carried out mostly for the sake of tourism. In point of fact, the Blessing as it exists today was not initiated until 1948, and only after other fishing communities in Cape Cod began to do so as a means of attracting tourists.

As the stories go, back in the ‘old days’, the Portuguese recognized two different groups within their community: the ‘St. Michael’s’, which included most of the families originally from the Azores; and the ‘Lisbon’s’, corresponding to those who had originally come from the Portuguese mainland – Portugal and the Algarve. I was told that there used to be a lot of rivalry between the two groups, as the ‘Lisbon’s’ asserted that they had a superior status. However, although gangs from these two groups were said to fight each other on land, this rivalry did not extend to the sea. The treacherous ocean waters became a common enemy, but, at the same time, a common means of subsistence.

It was also said that “one did not marry across the railroad tracks”, that used to run down from MacMillan Wharf dividing the town in half (the tracks were removed in the 1950s). The St. Michael’s were reported to live west of the tracks, while the Lisbon’s were on the east side. But both groups lived near the Wharf, not only because they were

fishermen, but also because of the unpleasant odor of dead fish which was avoided by the 'Yankees', who lived east, but as far away from the Wharf as possible. Today, most of the Portuguese have also moved away from the Wharf to live more inland, although there still appears to be an East and West spatial distribution of the descendants of the former 'St. Michael's' and 'Lisbon's'.

Native Provincetowners have historically disliked and been suspicious of newcomers. Even in 1799 the local townspeople refused to help a needy widow simply because she was a Methodist (Digges 1937). The Portuguese encountered similar hostility from the native population which culminated in the burning of a cross on the front lawn of St. Peter's Church by the local Ku Klux Klan. Eventually, the Portuguese were accepted, such that today they consider themselves 'charter members' and are perceived by others as such. Yet, the Portuguese still interact socially more often only with other Portuguese. As noted, they control much of the town's political life, to the point that one informant I talked to proclaimed that "you don't win an election in this town without the native support," especially not with the support of the Portuguese who constitute now the largest 'native' group.

When the first artists began to arrive in Provincetown at the turn of the century, many of them rented rooms from the Portuguese. The fishermen and their families were often the subjects of their portraits, and it is said that Eugene O'Neill's *Ile* was based on the real life story of a Portuguese sea captain (Digges 1937). It is believed that the relationship between artists and Portuguese were in good terms, as both groups were equally viewed as undesirable outsiders by the Town Fathers. In time, the people of the arts settled on the East side of town, and, even today, that is the area where one finds the best art galleries, the Provincetown Art Association, and 'Rosy's', a local restaurant which stands as the meeting place of artists and 'literati' in general. A long time summer resident has also indicated that, during the early 1950's, the East side was also (and to an extent still is) the "Greenwich Village crowd" territory.

There is also an abstract dividing line between the old established artists, performers, and literary people at large and the 'new' ones. The older sector (not only in age, but also in terms of long term residence in Provincetown and amount of professional success) has been well accepted by the townsfolk and they actively participate in the life of the community as a whole. Many of them are involved in local committees, and they are stereotypically much more liberal in their views and actions than the native population, which is often labeled as 'conservative' and reactionary. Many of these artists (I am using the term 'artists' loosely) have taken an environmental preservation stand in many issues which have come up in town Hall, such as that of the building of a marina in the harbor: they emphatically opposed it! Some of them formed a group, the Outer Cape Environmental Action, known by its acronym, "OCEA", whose goal is to preserve Provincetown as it is. In time, this group also gained support from the natives.

In contrast, the 'new' line of artists, generally referred to as the 'artsy-craftsy' crowd, is generally not well accepted in the community. They are involved in leather crafts, in portrait painting for tourists, in the confection of costume jewelry, and the like. They operate small craft shops on Commercial Street and cater almost exclusively to tourists, however, according to one of the 'natives' I interviewed, they are "barely making do." Many of the natives associate them with the 'hippies' that invaded the Cape during the 1960's, who were greatly disliked by the townsfolk (in point of fact, a 'native'

commented that my sunglasses looked like those of the ‘hippies’ and that I should not wear them!). Many of these new artists are seen as ‘drifters’ who just “swell up the unemployment lines.”

Another important sector of Provincetown’s population and of the town’s socio-cultural environment is the ‘gay’ group, which has been gradually settling in the town in the last three decades or so, and consists mostly of gay men rather than lesbians. At first, small in numbers and modest in their display of homo-affectivity, the gay people were considered a sort of curiosity, and did not face great hostility from the town folks. Furthermore, whether they were in reality artists or not, the first gay persons that were recognized as such within the population were viewed by the natives as belonging to the artists’ sector, and thus, were allowed the greater latitude of behavior regarding their sexual preference usually conferred upon artists. However, as a long-time gay summer resident told me, about twenty years ago the town tried to “get rid” of the gay people, but as the summer profits went considerably down, they were forced to re-open their shores to the gay population.

Although this comment was not confirmed by anybody else I talked to, it is quite possible that even if some residents resented the growing presence of the gay population in town, the importance of the revenue brought in by gay visitors could not be denied – neither then, nor now! As one native confided, it was only for part of the year, after all, and gay money rented the town’s rooms and payed for meals at restaurants and bars owned by locals. To be sure, some people did refuse to rent out rooms to gay couples, but others ‘preferred’ to rent to gay people because “they were so clean and neat.”

With the emergence of the Gay Liberation Movement, public affective expressions among gay couples became gradually more accepted: it no longer remained confined to gay bars and boarding houses, but was freely displayed on the streets “under the sunlight”, as a gay acquaintance informed. This brought an increasing hostility against gays - hostility being intensified as more and more gay persons remained in town after the summer was long over, and began to purchase local property, thus competing for available resources, particularly in terms of tourist revenue. Encroachment into the town’s ‘residential territory’, transgressing the limits of ‘tourist land’ (a 2 ½ mile stretch along Commercial Street), was sure to bring a hostile response from natives, and a call for active defense of territorial boundaries. Yet, it was even more unacceptable the fact that, as gays began to purchase business establishments (hotels, bars, restaurants, etc.) and cater exclusively to gay customers, gay revenue was diverted from natives’ pockets to gay pockets.

Today, most of the gay population concentrates just West of Town Hall and mostly on Commercial Street. But there is a sharp division between gay males and lesbians, each group staying mainly within their social and territorial boundaries. There are lesbians’ bars and male homosexuals’ bars, and this segregation extends to hotels, boarding houses, bookstores, and so on. While the males are highly visible, the lesbians are not so easily identifiable. Furthermore, lesbians tend to be much more involved in community affairs, working in the Drop-in Center, the Community Center, and lobbying for women’s rights.

Provincetown also has a large seasonal, semi-resident population, which further complicates the town’s social makeup. Within this semi-resident sector I include: 1)

families that have been coming to the Cape for several years and may or may not own property in town; 2) business owners and operators of shops, bars, restaurants, etc..., that are only opened during the summertime; 3) performers and entertainers who work at the local night-clubs and have been doing so for several seasons; and 4) the summer-work groups of young college students who work in the restaurants, shops and other commercial establishments and have been doing so regularly. There are also large number of artists and gays at large who are long-time summer residents.

There is a clear distinction between this long-term summer residents and the casual tourists. The latter are often identified as 'day trippers' or simply weekend visitors, some of them camping on the trailer court available for the large influx of 'on-wheels' families that have taken up this luxurious form of camping. In general, these tourists are the ones to buy the souvenir paraphernalia sold on Commercial Street, the portrait sketches done by young art students, the food sold at the cheaper food stands.

Although the casual visitor may gain the impression that in Provincetown one can behave as one pleases without censorship, there are appropriate behavioral codes to be followed according to the sector of the population with which one is identified. An occasional summer resident who took a job in Provincetown and became a permanent resident so confided:

“When you come to Provincetown as a tourist you can do pretty much of anything, nobody cares. But after you start living here, you can't go to those wild parties anymore, people in town will know all about it the day after.”

She further stated that she had a few problems adjusting because of her view “of reality in Provincetown”. In her own words: “I was the one who was wrong, not the townspeople.”

Group identification will usually determine the manner of dress one will follow, the beaches one will go to, the bars one will frequent, and, in general, the people one will interact with outside of simple business transactions. Once one associates with one group, one becomes 'stigmatized' so to speak, and will find it difficult to associate with other groups. I personally encountered this problem, since as an aspiring ethnographer, I was trying to gain access into all the different sectors of the population. I believe that the only way that I was able to be accepted by all the different groups was by claiming association to none. Nevertheless, I had to follow the appropriate behavior of a 'native' (which is much stricter) so as to gain respect not only for myself as an individual, but also for my research. However, I did affirm my Portuguese ancestry when working with the Portuguese, since that made for easier acceptance into the group.

Of course, each different sector of the town's population has its own 'subculture,' so to speak; however, there are two activities which are common to all groups: drinking and gossiping. Indeed, most of my work in participant-observation was done in bars over a drink (drinks?), listening to town's gossip. People gossiped about anything and anybody; political gossip was a favorite (what's up in Town Hall?), yet, 'bedroom gossip' (who is sleeping with whom, who is gay and who is not) definitely took first place. Once one becomes a known face it is difficult to hide much from anybody in such a small area, and one may easily be the subject of public scrutiny. I learned this the hard way: I attended a demonstration to support nude beaches in Truro, and despite keeping my bathing suit on, at all times, I was soon being criticized for being there...

Town Hall Politics

As it might be expected, political life in Provincetown is extremely active and rather complex, given the existence of different groups competing for control and manipulation of few resources. Provincetown is still governed by an elected Board of Selectmen consisting of five individuals who appoint the Town Manager (in charge of administration, exclusively), and other official positions, such as the Treasurer, the Counsel Licensing Agent, and the heads of various committees. The Selectmen hold public meetings twice a month, when they vote on the granting of licenses, hear complaints, accept petitions, and so forth.

There are two annual General Meetings (in April and October) opened only to locally registered voters, but special Town Meetings may also be called during the year. Usually, however, the Town Meetings have so many articles on the agenda, that the meetings may last for several days, weeks, and sometimes even for an entire month. It often happens that there is not a quorum to conduct business, as it was the case of a special meeting during the summer, when items on the agenda ended up being postponed until the regular meeting in October. A town employee complained that: "It cost the town more than \$1000 to call up this meeting. But everybody knows that it is stupid to have meetings in the summer. Nobody shows up. Everybody is busy working, and who wants to spend evenings at Town Hall listening to stupid arguments, anyway?" If some group is particularly interested in having an ordinance passed or in another item on the agenda, they will gather those who favor the proposition to come to the meetings only on the evening in which the item will be discussed, and then leave shortly after the vote is taken.

'Territorial behavior' between sectors of the population can be observed during the Selectmen meetings, especially in the handling of operating licenses for business establishments. Not rarely, the natives may use zoning ordinances to confine gay people and tourists to restricted geographical areas. The general complaint is against 'noise', but as a native confessed, with the agreement of others: "We are tired of these faggots. We don't want them to have a cabaret near our house."

Indeed, there is much hostility on the part of natives against gays, particularly among the Portuguese. The crew of a local boat confided that there is a \$50 fine for hitting gays (actually, the fine is for public disorder), so, they stated: "It is \$50 regardless of how many punches you throw, so if you're going to hit one, make it good!" They further complained that the gay people have had a bad influence on the town, and one of them said: "Jesus, so many people from graduating class have gone gay!" Nor surprisingly, gays see the Portuguese as their enemies. Talking to a gay acquaintance while sipping a drink on the deck of a local hotel, I heard him state, and be cheered on by other gay men also lounging around, that a couple of years ago a group of gay men tried to get together and buy property in town to "drive the Portuguese away". In reality, there is no observable open aggression, but there is a great amount of tension between gays and natives, the Portuguese in particular, and the two groups try to interact as little as possible.

Provincetown is further divided by several competing factions, the strongest of them being OCEA and SCRAM – Serious Citizens Revolting Against Mismanagement. It is interesting to learn how this latter group was formed. It is said that a group of

individuals with personal grievances against the Town Manager tried to get the Board of Selectmen to fire him on charges that he was corrupt. They further held that the Town Manager, whose position should be only administrative, was in fact “running the town”, since the Selectmen were letting him direct their decisions. When the Selectmen did not respond to these charges, the complaining individuals formed SCRAM, and delivered a petition to the Selectmen containing 750 signatures, asking for the “Recalling of the Selectmen”. The Board disregarded the petition; eventually, SCRAM took it to the State level, and for over one year the Board fought the case – and a large part of the Town’s funds was spent in the court battle. This lasted for over a year, period during which the culprit Town Manager was fired. Eventually, the Board agreed to follow suit, since, as one of the Selectmen disclosed: “This community is so deeply divided, this has to stop!”

The Recalling of the Selectmen was finally put to the vote of the community; by then, a powerful political force in town, SCRAM was influential in having the entire Board recalled, and placed two of its members on the newly elected board. A third SCRAM member had already been elected to the Board in one earlier election to fill the position of a retiring member; he was not up for recall, as his term began after the court proceeding had begun. SCRAM’s critics note that, despite being formed as a faction with personal grievances against the Town Manager, SCRAM was able to gain great support in the community by claiming that it was fighting corruption in Town Hall. At present, with a 3-2 majority on the Board of Selectmen, and great support in the community, SCRAM now appears to have a free hand in policy formulation and decision-making processes in the town’s government. However, even within SCRAM, there are different factions, mainly composed of those individuals who are also members of OCEA, and those who support a group known as ‘Cee-Jay Developers’ in environmental protection issues.

The Love-Hate Relationship with Tourism

The fight between the ‘conservatives’ (OCEA) and the developers stems from the great dilemma that most Cape Cod communities - and similar communities elsewhere – must solve: how to exploit tourism as an economic resource base without being destroyed by it in the process. This predicament is responsible for the ‘love-hate’ relationship between natives and tourists. Late in February the townspeople are already making plans and discussing the summer season: will the tourists come out or not, are they still remembering “Jaws” (the movie, some townspeople were afraid that tourist would be scared away, particularly since the movie supposedly takes place in New England), will they have a good profit, or not? These concerns affect not only business owners, but the entire community as well, because summer means jobs, desperately needed jobs for most of the population.

Indeed, in the off-season 49% of the population are unemployed and living off unemployment compensation checks. In the summer, however, most of the people work two, sometimes even three jobs! With the arrival of tourists every year, shopkeepers and clerks are needed; waiter, waitresses, hotel maids, parking lot attendants, janitors and janitresses for the public restrooms must be found; the police force must be increased, and a number of other jobs must be filled, jobs which do not exist during the winter time. The greater the number of tourists, the greater the number of jobs available. The 37 motels and hotels, the 36 guest houses and cottages, the 29 restaurants and the

numerous bars, night clubs, shops, stores, all need employees to cater to the tourists. The summer season is therefore the main source of revenue for the town as a whole!

Nevertheless, early in July complaints about the tourists are already heard everywhere. The town is too crowded, there are no parking spaces available: "I can't even park my car in front of my own house!", people complain. There is too much noise, traffic, pollution, disturbances! As I heard a native affirm: "I can't wait until October, I wish summer were over!" Yet, this said, there is a drive towards extending the summer season, enticing tourists to come to Provincetown in the winter months, as this add in the local newspaper exemplifies:

"We don't pull up the sidewalks after Labor Day. Not anymore. Provincetown is at its most beautiful during the Alternative Seasons, fall, winter, and spring. So come back to Provincetown and rediscover romance here after the summer crowds go. The dunes and the beaches are a delight. The air is crisp and clean. Flower bloom until well after Thanksgiving. And you save as much as 30% on most accommodations..." (*The Provincetown Advocate*, Thursday, November 25, 1976:20).

The 'developers' favor the construction of a new parking lot at the town's entrance to accommodate the tourists. They further favor the building of a new, large marina for more leisure boats, and the construction of condominiums and motels. Basically, they are willing "to go tourism all the way", accuse their opponents, believing that this would increase jobs and revenue for the town.

The 'conservatives', on the other hand, believe that if such steps are followed, the town will become just "another summer resort": it will lose its identity, and that quaint atmosphere and scenario that attracts so many people. It remains to be seen who will win at the end, but the fact remains: Provincetown's economy depends on tourism, and there are no other resources at hand upon which the town can depend.

The Demise of Fishing

It must be stressed that fishing is not, nor are there any indications that it can become again, a viable economic base for Provincetown – not even with the new extended protective legislation regarding industrial fishing in the waters nearby. Like hunting, fishing as it is done from Provincetown (small-scale, private enterprise) is by its very nature the type of activity which does not foster expansion (in terms of number of boats in the fleet), if individuals want to maximize their profits. Presently, Provincetown's fishing fleet has approximately 30 boats, the fishing business employing approximately 200 people, at the most. There are two fish-brokers in town: the Provincetown Fishing Cooperative, owned and operated by the fishermen themselves, and Seafood Packers Inc., owned by a businessman who is not a fisherman. These two establishments are in constant competition with each other to have the boats registered with them, constantly accusing each other of exploiting the fishermen.

In Provincetown, fishing is a family business – a Portuguese family business, as most fishermen are of Portuguese extraction, the boat crews being generally composed of a father, his sons, his sons-in-law, or other closely related individuals. To make fishing bring profits, the boat owner must be able to collect enough fish to pay for the mortgage of the boat, property insurance, personal injury insurance ("P & I") on the crew, pay the

crew, pay for the food that is served on board: in sum, his boat must be very productive if he is to make any personal profit. Boats cost a fortune (over \$100,000), and in addition, US regulations require a number of sophisticated (and expensive) safety devices on board. Therefore, the fishermen must invest a great amount of money on something that, in a way, is a gamble: the fish are not always there to be found. Besides, the larger the fishing fleet, the smaller will be the catch for each boat. Intensified fishing will also eventually lead to a reduction of the resource itself. This is already happening due to industrial fishing done by large Russian and Japanese ships just outside the present 30 miles limit.

Since fishing resources are limited, the fishermen themselves do not favor an expansion of Provincetown's fishing fleet. Furthermore, there is very little revenue brought to the town through fishing. Both fish houses rent Wharf space from the town, but this does not amount to more than approximately \$25-30,000 per year. However, fishing does attract tourists, particularly for the 'Blessing of the Fleet' feast. So, here we come again to the importance of tourism in the town's economy.

Final Considerations

It is important to observe that in addition to the economic and ecological implications associated with tourism, the drastic seasonal changes in the life of Provincetown have repercussions in all aspects of social life, which are of interest to anthropological concerns. For example, it is important to ask: What effects does tourism have on the life of the local population regarding family life? Would the seasonal variations provoke two distinct modes of life for the residents? Which segments are more affected?

I mentioned earlier that during the summer months not as many people take part in town hall politics, primarily because their summer jobs do not allow them the time. When speaking of the fact that the elections for the recall of the Selectmen were scheduled during the summer, a member of SCRAM confided that the Board did this on purpose to maximize their chances of not being recalled: in the summer, not too many people would have the time to attend to this business. Yet, if competition for resources is intensified in the summer, it could be argued that Provincetown's political life is much more active then, than in the off-season.

I have already indicated that 'drinking and gossiping' are two favorite past-times in Provincetown. I was told that in the winter, both of these activities assume greater proportions, as "there is not much else to do, especially for those on unemployment comp," as an informant so declared. Yet another observed: "This town has a lot of alcoholics." Would this be related to 'winter idleness' as this person suggested?

In the summer, the Portuguese do not seem to form a very cohesive, highly visible ethnic group in town. But it could be argued that in the summer, like the remaining local population, the Portuguese are likely too busy to engage in any activities other than economic ones. Of course, no conclusion regarding this issue, nor those already mentioned, can be made without a study of Provincetown in the off-season. In point of fact, I would suggest that no final statements can be made about life in Provincetown in general until a year-long field research is undertaken. There is much to be learned from such a study, particularly in relation to the manner in which the population of a summer resort adapts to the seasonal variations caused by tourism. Does tourism disrupt family

life? How are the normal, everyday activities of the community interrupted during the tourist season? Does it affect the religious life of the people? And further, to what an extent does tourism work as a modernizing agent? These, and several other questions which may be asked about the role of tourism in the life of a community are relevant anthropological concerns. They call for further research in Provincetown during the off-season period, so that, based on a comparative analysis, we may hopefully arrive at conclusions of greater significance regarding the life of this – and of similar communities.

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